

THE
EMIGRANT SHIP

W. CLARK RUSSELL



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THE EMIGRANT SHIP

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL

AUTHOR OF

"THE WRECK OF THE GROSVENOR," "JACK'S COURTSHIP," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE EMIGRANT SHIP.

CHAPTER I.

BRIGSTOCK'S SCHEME.

I SAT as requested, lighting my pipe afresh. The tobacco, being thick-cut and damp, yielded a long smoke. I felt nervous on a sudden. But the swing of the lamp threw a frequent shadow over my face, which I knitted into a hard, resolved expression; a thing not difficult to manage, when you have plenty of eyebrows, and slack, sailorly hair upon the brow, and when there's no hurry to speak or act.

The others did not offer to sit. They stood in the light, watching me or Brigstock, who leaned with one hand upon the table,

and leisurely and gravely motioned with the other, whilst he addressed me.

“Perhaps,” said he, “it’ll be best to say, right off, what our scheme is. There’s a good many little islands in the South Pacific, onowned and oninhabited. Some lies near the hequator, some in more temperate climes, where the air’s sweet as new milk, where little or no clothes is wanted, and where there’s the whole boilin’ of a Covent Gard’n Market in one hacre o’ soil. Think of what’s to be found and cultivated: fish and cocoa-nuts, and burnaneys and bread fruit, vi-happles, oranges, sugar-cane, yams, and sweet ’tatoes. Ain’t that good enough?”

He looked slowly round at the three men, who responded with an emphatic nod.

“Nature is man’s father and mother. She gives him bamboos for bricks, and the cocoa-nut’s his rum-cask and his oil-can. Us men’s scheme is to choose a good, onowned island down in them seas, and settle upon it, along with certain females in this vessel, who’ve agreed to be our pardners in the undertaking.”

He paused to observe the effect of this. I sucked my pipe, and eyed him in silence, head back, and arms folded.

“Of course you’re aware,” he continued, “that there’s nothen original in our scheme? Others have hacted in a like way, and they’ve proved the glory of Britannia, as witness the United States of America, which was long a dependency of our nation, also Australia. Port Lewis, Barkley Sound, was colonized twenty odd year ago, by Lieutenant Smith and six or seven seamen, who built houses and growed radishes, onions, and flowers. Yer’ll have heard of the Spanish colonel as settled one of the Galapagos. He called it Floriade. When I was off it, in 1838, the population had rose to three hundred. They sold us fowls and pigs, and they growed maize and sugar. Had they been English, they’d ha’ thrive. That there colonel was an old fool. ’Stead of colonizing with steady, hard-workin’ respectable gells, like them we’ve chose, he loads out o’ the gutter, manures his rock with everything that’s godless in petticoats in

Guyaquil, then takes and plants a shipful of prison-weeds in the choice soil, and tarns in to dream of 'arvest. You're not going to get any building to stand upright long on mud and slime. Mix your scheme with the vartues, if you wants good concrete and a solid foundation. Ain't that right?"

The seamen looked as though, having on former occasions expressed their opinion on this point, they considered the question addressed to me. By this time I had judged that Brigstock was a man who enjoyed hearing his own voice; who also had a high opinion of his flow of language. One of your respectable, mulish, perhaps religious, seamen; sullen, slow, and stiff with obstinate and absurd convictions, but of rude powers of mind, and capable of influencing, at all events, such sailors as I might judge composed the remainder of the original crew of this ship. But I also perceived that he had the forecastle project very clearly defined in his brain, and that I was called upon to deal with a man who had made up his mind.

“Your intention,” said I, “is to settle an island—when you’ve discovered something that suits you—in the South Pacific?”

“South, or North.”

“You have found women amongst the emigrants willing to go ashore and live with you?”

“That’s so.”

“Are all hands of you agreed in this?”

“To a man, sir,” he answered, with solemn energy.

“How many females do you intend to take ashore with you?”

“Why, twelve, to be sure; a wife for each man,” he answered, in a raised voice, slightly accentuated by indignation, and some blood coloured his face.

“What do you mean to do with the ship, and the rest of the people?”

“We’ve given that our serious consideration,” said he. “The ship’s not to be hurt. The safety of the females left aboard has to be provided for. Mr. Morgan, here’s our offer: navigate us to the island that’ll suit us—the ship’s then yours to do what you

like with. D'yer ask who's to work her? Who but Kanakas, which we'll put jer in the way of filling your fok'sle with, before we part."

The secret fears I just now called "nervousness" were by this time changed into tingling astonishment. It was clear, anyhow, no villainy was intended—nothing, I mean, that might correspond in rascality with the stratagem that had brought me into the ship. The fat seaman whom Brigstock called Jupe Jackson, exclaimed in a queer, female voice—

"How are we to know that the capt'n mayn't fancy our scheme, and be willing to settle down along with us?"

"Ha! why, of course," said Brigstock; "should you, arter a bit, see your way to make one of our colony, Mr. Morgan—and I notice you've already found a party on board as might be glad to take up with yer—then it'll be for us to consider in what way the ship and the remaining females are to be sent to a port."

"There's a plenty of whalers as 'ud be

glad to take the job in hand," exclaimed the man Bill Prentice.

"Wives for the askin', and piles o' salvage money to keep 'em on," said the wiry-moustachiod seaman Isaac Coffin. "If whalemén han't changed since I went a-fishing, they'll need no coaxing."

"Do I understand," said I, "that after you and the women who accompany you are landed, you'll hand this ship with her cargo and remaining passengers over to me to sail to a port?"

"To do what yer like with, I said," answered Brigstock.

"It's onderstood," said Coffin, "that we takes out of her what o' the cargo our colony'll need?"

"They'll send a gunboat to carry you home, and lag you for piracy and other crimes, if you meddle with the goods in this ship," I exclaimed.

"I'm not of that opinion," said Brigstock, after a pause. "We have a claim on the ship for wages. 'Stead of taking our earnings up in money, we pays ourselves off

in goods. Where's the piracy? Put us twelve men's wages together, say for four months, and call the amount fifty pound a month. There's then two hundred pound a-howing. We don't want cash; we takes it out in goods. D'jer call that piracy? Let the owners send our wages to the people the goods are consigned to. That's my way of looking the job over fair from crown to heel?"

I searched his face as he leaned across the table, to discover by any twinkle of eye, by any twitch of mouth or curl of lip that he knew he talked nonsense. But his countenance was as fixed and sedate with mulish and monkey-like complacency as though it had been a figure-head likeness of him. I had no intention to argue.

"Did you men sail from London with this scheme in your head?" I asked.

"No. It's come along of our washing about here with nothen to do, and talking with the women," answered Brigstock.

"In less than ten days' time all twelve hands of you have lighted upon this fancy of a little Pacific commonwealth?"

“Commonwealth’s the word, and a good word it is,” said Brigstock, glancing with a leer at his mates. “Ay, it’s all come in ten days, and the job’s as ready for launching as if it had been in hand ten year.”

“Are any of you married men?” said I.

“Joe Harding’s got a wife knocking about somewhere at home, I onderstand,” answered Brigstock, seating himself. “But if his yarns are true, she’s not a sort of party that any right-minded man would allow himself to be hindered by in detarmining to become one of the fathers of a new constitootion.”

“Does the woman who is willing to become his partner know he is married?” I asked.

“Sartingly. I asked Bill here to find out, and she said Joe had told her at wanst.”

“Do you expect to find a clergyman on your island?” said I.

“I onderstand your meaning,” he answered, smiling slowly and gravely at Jackson. “It’s agreed that I’m to be president. The president of a republic combines, as the sayin’ is, the functions of the priest as well as the

magistrate. What's a parson at home? They ain't *all* made, yer know, by what's called consecration. My powers as a priest'll be the same as any shore-going parson, whether he's consecrated or whether he ain't. Why? because I shall be helected by the voice of the community whose hinterests I'm to represent; so that whatever I do'll be the expression of their minds. My hacts'll be law. Why? because they'll be the construin' of the meaning of the people. I can marry 'em and I can divorce 'em. It was done down at Pitcairn and at Tristan, and it stands good. Every nation makes laws for itself. D'jer dispute 'em? Then it's for the police ter find out why yer do. That's how we've put it to the females here. They become as lawfully the wives of the men I marry 'em to as though the Harchbishop of Canterbury had settled along with us and read the sarvice. So, when we gets ashore, I divorces Joe Harding from the woman he's left behind him. He's satisfied, and his pardner's agreeable. Therefore, Mr. Morgan, the customs and laws and regula-

tions of what you rightly call our commonwealth having been established, what's the difference in principle between my divorcing of Joe and his being divorced by a judge in England?"

The fat seaman, Jupe, listened with a stupid face of staring attention. Bill and the other followed the speech with sniggering appreciation. For my part, I was amazed by the man's gabbling fluency, which I was forced within myself to own was not wanting in sense either.

"I don't think," said he, regarding me earnestly, and feeling in the breast-pocket of his coat, "that my views are to be heasily upset. Settle a shipload of men and women upon an island, and the laws they make for themselves are the laws of their country, which all who visit them must respect. Ain't that right?"

I nodded, wondering now what the hour was, and what resolution I must form with regard to the command of the ship. It was blowing with no more weight, yet the wind came hard. The dance of the sea was angry,

and the roaring under the bows struck aft with the plunges in short thunderous strokes of sound like the bursting of a sail. The windy moonlight ran like a sheet of white silk thrown and then withdrawn upon the skylight glass. I hardly knew what sail the vessel was under, and my instincts as a seaman were teasing me to go on deck and take a look at the weather, and see how things stood with the vessel.

“Now, Mr. Morgan,” said Brigstock, viewing a spectacle-case he had pulled out of his pocket as though he could not recollect his motive in producing it, “we should very much like to have your opinion of our scheme, sir.”

The seamen looked searchingly at me—one as he lay swinging over the back of a chair, the others as they swayed side by side at the table, one with his hands buried in his breeches-pockets, the other with arms akimbo, limbs of yellow flesh, hard as rocks with muscle, and garnished with twenty wild and barbarous devices in prickings—the crucifix, the mermaid, the bracelet, the heart, and other forecastle poetic savageries.

"My opinion!" I echoed. "I'm an honest man, I hope, and you shall have an honest answer. Your notion of colonizing a South Sea Island is good, and worth encouraging. Let British civilization spread, especially in waters where the black man's dinner is often still the white man. And you, too, are honest, Mr. Brigstock, eh? you and the remaining ship's company?" said I, looking at the seamen. "You don't want my opinion on this project?"

"Shouldn't have asked it otherwise," answered Brigstock.

"Then do your duty as English seamen first," said I. "By which I mean that you've got to see the women in your 'tweendecks safe ashore in the land the ship sailed for; then turn to and colonize as hard as you can."

Jupe Jackson looked quickly and with temper in his little eyes at Brigstock. Prentice and Coffin spoke together. Brigstock lifted his hand.

"We can't spoil our plan," said he very respectfully, and as solemnly as if he was talk-

ing to me across a dead body, "because your notions of dooty don't exactly tally with ourn. There's twelve of the females us men's going to provide for. All the hinconvenience the others'll be put to'll arise from their being kept at sea a little longer than they expected. But, then, d'jer see, afore we make the island we want, it might happen that other parties'll be glad to jine us in a motherly and sisterly way, to help in the work all round, without, of course, considering themselves servants: providing the pardners we've chose are agreeable. Supposing that—then here's a colony that'll provide at the start for, maybe, twenty or thirty females, who'd otherwise, for all yer to know, come upon the poor-rates, and raise the cost of livin' in Sydney. Ain't that good enough to keep the rest who stops in the ship a bit longer at sea than they bargained for?"

"It's not answerable," said Coffin, cockily.

"Another matter," continued Brigstock, putting on a pair of strong magnifying-glasses, and standing up under the light to read from the side of an old newspaper, which

he had drawn out of his pocket, carefully folded in canvas. "The notion of most of the 'parties below,'" said he, stooping his head to look at me over his spectacles, "is that they'll not be a week ashore afore they'll be all swallowed up in marriage. I've sounded 'em—it's their idea. Ninety squatters, a-wallowing in wealth'll be waiting at the dockyard gates for these females to land, in order to court and carry 'em off to hup-country palaces. What's the truth? Here's a piece we found in a paper that belongs to one of the men, named Snortledge—I've read it to many of the women. Some it hinfluenced—twelve sartinly, and perhaps, more;" he slowly smiled at Prentice—"unfortunately there's but twelve men."

Then, clearing his throat with a strong cough, he read the following—

"Viewed as a marriage market, New South Wales must, at present, be set down as decidedly and shockingly bad. A speculative young woman emigrating, without capital, in the hope of securing an establishment for life, will no more succeed than would the

young man without funds make a livelihood by coming out as a squatter. The reverses of the Colony made men cautious, and they continue so. Strange to say, too, the well-brought-up and pretty maidens of the middle and servant classes of Sydney, do not appear to be much sought in marriage. Yet it is undoubtedly in these classes that the well-known preponderance of males exists. The single men do not want wives, and the responsibilities and encumbrances of family life. They prefer working, hard working like slaves, four or five days, and larking the rest of the week!"

He sunk his head to look at me again over his spectacles. I had listened with attention, for there was truth in every word of what he had delivered, and all the while I followed him Kate Daruley was in my mind.

"It's reasonable enough," said he, "that parties going out to a new country mainly to get married should be willing to pick up with respectable men as they go along?"

He carefully refolded the newspaper, stowed

it away in its canvas cover, and pocketed it along with his glasses.

“Ain’t it about time that Mr. Morgan here should tell us what he means to do?” said Coffin, who had been pulling hard at his moustache and making nervous grimaces with his eyes, vulgarly arch with a look of low humour, fastened upon me whilst Brigstock read.

“Yes,” I answered quickly; “but bear this in mind: I’ve been in this ship since noon only, and have but heard of your scheme within the last hour. I’m not to be committed to a heavy responsibility without reflection. If I voluntarily consent to command the vessel, I become one of your number, and I’d like to consider all that your resolution means before I settle with you.”

“Make no mistake about one thing,” exclaimed Brigstock, gravely wagging a forefinger at me, “when we was left helpless—that’s to say without a navigator in this ship, vartually we were as much discharged as though we’d stepped ashore and been paid off.”

“I don’t think so,” said I.

“Well, then, I’m *sure* of it,” he cried, with some show of temper.

“Isn’t a ship’s crew discharged when she goes ashore and’s wrecked? What’s the difference between a vessel being hard and fast on the rocks, and a ship like ourn a-washing about helpless?” said Prentice.

“It’s as I say,” continued Brigstock. “We’re discharged from the articles by what the underwriters would term the hact of God. We can’t go ashore in the middle of the ocean, can we? Then, having a ship under our feet, we’ve got a perfect right to sail her to any spot we may helect as convenient to land on.”

This was a sea lawyer! one of your choice hands who will play the deuce with a captain’s nerves; just the sort of philosopher to dominate a crew, and make the sailors see things exactly from his point of view.

“You talk of hunting for an island in the Pacific, north or south,” said I. “How long do you mean to take to find it?”

“Oh, we’ll carry-on, we’ll carry-on,” answered Brigstock. “She’s got heels, has

this ship. We shall have the island aboard us in three months."

"Easy," exclaimed Coffin, with an impatient twist of his wiry figure.

"There are above a hundred souls on board," said I. "You've already drunk up a good deal of your fresh water, I guess. What stock's left?"

"Plenty," answered Brigstock. "I allow that Captain Halcrow never intended to touch at the Cape. The stock that's a-going to last from the Thames to New South Wales is a-going to last from the Thames to the South Sea. What's the difference? It'll be only putting her off west 'stead of east, when the latitood's run down, with islands to rise every morning arter a bit when the Horn's sunk well astern."

"I advise you to count your gallons again, Mr. Brigstock," said I.

"You're the scholar of this ship—we'll leave that to you, sir," he answered respectfully.

"I'll give you a reply in the morning," said I, getting up. "I hear no bells.

They should be kept going. What's the hour?"

He drew out his watch and answered, "Half-past nine."

I pulled on my coat and put on my hat, designing a turn on deck, for somehow I felt that I could think more clearly out in the wild freedom of the windy starry night with its flying moonshine than down here in this horizon of elegant panels and creaking bulkheads.

"Let it stand till to-morrow, then," said Brigstock. "It's but right yer should have time to meditate a bit. Jupe, there's no rum, and the capt'n'll be wanting a nightcap. Jump for a lantern, my lad. All the spirits are in the lazarette, Mr. Morgan. The hatch is padlocked, and I've got the key, but it's yourn when yer mind's made up. Yer'll see your way, I hope? What's the meaning of it but this: you're to put us in the road of getting ashore; the ship's then to be handed over to yer. I'm no swearer," he continued slowly and deliberately, "but I could take a big oath"—here he let his heavy fist fall

upon the table—"that a fairer, straight-furruder offer than ourn was never before made to a man, and that never in all the maritime hannals in the likes of such a traverse as this will yer hear or read of a crew of sailor-men with honester sentiments and uprighter meanings than's in this ship."

I nodded that he might know I heard him, and went up the companion-steps.

CHAPTER II.

THE WOMEN.

It was blowing a topgallant breeze. Large, shadow-like wings of cloud were spreading across the moon, and the bright stars shot through the rush of dark stuff, as though all between was a race of meteors. The flight of the ship through the night was a stirring and splendid picture; at every curtsy she piled the water to her spritsail yard; the dusky line of the ocean throbbed clear and hard against a spectral airy greenish dimness; but under the moon the long black forms of seas glanced in lines of pale light.

I walked to the break of the poop, lost in thought. The black shape of a seaman trudged to and fro near the wheel, at which stood a second figure. The main-hatch wind-

sail was wildly working and yawning like the struggling wearied ghost of a giant, under the mainyard ; half the hatch lay open as before, buried in darkness.

I stood looking at that black oblong of hatch slowly forming a resolution : marveling likewise, as with an undernote of thought, at the deep human significance this rushing and streaming ship took from the crowds of sleepers in her black heart. Had the souls of the slumberers combined into a spirit for her that she should take the seas in that spurning, topping, feverish way, as though she knew what her load was and its trust in her ? Often had the ships I'd sailed in seemed live things to me ; but never was ship so living as this that night and *then*.

Half an hour after I had left the cuddy, Brigstock came up the ladder and told me he'd put some wine and spirits in the pantry ; they were to be for my own private use, he said ; he added that the men continued on their regular allowance of a tot of grog a day, which was all he meant they should have.

“ When I starts my commonwealth,” he

sung out to me, slanting his figure to my ear, "there'll be no drink. Hintoxication'll stand next to murder as a crime. I'm for mixing the vartues well in; my scheme's to stand." He then bawled "George"!

The fellow who was walking aft came along the deck.

"I'll take charge now," said Brigstock. "This gemman I hope'll be our capt'n to-morrow."

The man touched his forehead, looking at me hard in that pale troubled light. He then went forward, and Brigstock made a step as if he would have me join him. But I had heard and talked enough. In an off-hand way I said, "Am I to use the captain's cabin?"

"Sartinly. If you take command, you'll make yourself welcome to what's inside it, I hope—merely as borrowings. Everything used can be handed back, when yer've carried the ship to a port. These here clothes I've got on I found in the mate's berth. My own chest's not well enough off to rig me out in a style proper to command that sort of

respect which my situation aboard lentitles me to."

"Good night," said I.

"We shall have your answer in the morning?"

"By eight o'clock," I replied.

I went straight to the captain's cabin, and turned the light up to shake the mattress and look round. I had noticed some boxes of cigars in the locker whilst imprisoned; I took one; it was a good cigar, and the smoke and fragrance of it soothed my excitement.

My situation was indeed extraordinary. Yet before I had quitted the deck I resolved to take command, though to hold my peace till the morning that my importance might gain by the crew's anxiety. I was largely influenced by the presence of Kate Darnley. But for that girl I don't know that I should have been quick in deciding. The past had come strongly upon me whilst I considered what to do. I lived again with her at Blathford through her holiday time there. She had passed out of my mind when she

left, but this sudden, unexpected meeting gave a sharpness to all the lines and tracings of memory. It is always so. You know a man slightly in your own country; he slips out of recollection; you meet him abroad, the farther away the better for the sentiment of recollection; scores of trivial things come back, and there may spring up a lasting friendship between you. Meet the same man at home, and you'd pass him by.

Kate Darnley's being on board was like an eloquent separate appeal to me to take charge of the ship. Then there was the safety of the crowd of poor women to think of. I judged I had no need to fear the men. The situation had come about quite honestly. There had been no violence, no mutiny. Certain disasters had left the ship's company without a navigating head. They had thought their condition over, and decided to people an uninhabited island, of which, to be sure, there was no lack in those days in the seas they wished me to steer them into. The women who had agreed to settle down with them doubtless knew what they were

doing. What sort of lot was to be theirs in Australia? In a South Pacific island they might flourish into a free, happy, and prosperous community. As to marriage: Brigstock was right when he implied that the patriarchal government of Pitcairn and Tristan was all himself and followers needed. Besides, how long would they need to wait for the heroic missionary with his blessing of legitimacy?

Thus ran my thoughts whilst I smoked the cigar, sometimes sitting, sometimes taking a turn about the cabin, once opening the door to listen, having caught the sound of men's voices singing out, and the echo in the planks of coils of gear flung down. I never questioned, if I refused the command, that Brigstock would get a navigator by such another stratagem as had decoyed me. And how would the crew use me, then? Would they tranship me, and so enable me to start the first propelled pennon we signalled after them?

Being thirsty, I took a match and stepped into the pantry, where I found some bottles

of claret and brandy, and they had filled the vinegar-jar with rum. I knocked the head off a claret-bottle, and drank half a tumbler of the wine. It was a cool drink, and smelt like a nosegay. I then ate the remains of the cold chicken, and thus refreshed, went back into my cabin, where I lighted a second cigar, resolved to make the very best of my state.

Nothing stirred in the cuddy, saving the leaps of the shadows with the abrupt swing of the lamp, when the ship came in a reeling heave to windward, then fell along on the slant of the under-rushing sea, with a forestful of whistlings and wild-beast cries in her rigging. I caught all sounds through the lee open lid of the skylight, and knew by them, and by the play underfoot, that the ship was doing a fair twelve, under the meteoric dance of moon and stars midst the breaks of the sweeping shadows.

Brightening the lamp, cigar in mouth, I nicely overhauled a second time the contents of this sea-bedroom. The chronometers were by a renowned maker; the sextants costly,

shining, beautiful instruments; all the mathematical gear of the best. Everything essential to the complete equipment of a navigator of those days, when, of course, the sea-science lacked the exquisite *mechanic* expression it now possesses, though I allow you no more *skill* in the mariners of to-day, was here. Alas! the dark hours of poor Halcrow's passage home would gather a deeper dye from thoughts of his property gone adrift, perhaps never more to be heard of.

I opened the log-book, and went through the entries, and again looked at the ship's papers, and tried to reckon the value of the goods in the hold from the particulars I glanced at. Was it the wine, or was it the imagination inspired by the contents of the tin box? It is sure my spirits were at this hour of six bells in a little dance. By my heart! thought I; but here, in this morning's treacherous entrapment of me have I found such a professional chance as, not having the wits to conceive it, I should not have known *how* to pray for? If I safely

bring this fine ship to port, what should—what *must* be my reward? Surely nothing less than the command of her next voyage; not to mention my claim as salvor. And, then, thought I, there is Kate Darnley. . . . And then, there is Kate Darnley. . . .

I yawned and laughed, put out the light, kicked off my shoes, and sprang into my bunk. Yet wearied as I had imagined myself, I lay awake for an hour, and, when I fell asleep, I dreamt that, being alone with Kate Darnley in the ship, I found Cadman in hiding under the cuddy-table. He made off with Kate, in a quarter-boat, and I gave chase in the *Earl of Leicester*. He drew me to the Great Salvage Island, then vanished, and the ship went ashore. I landed, and the first sight I beheld was Mr. Fletcher of Bristol, hanging on a gibbet, on the spot of cliff over whose edge he had hurled me.

I was aroused by the strong shivering light. Looking through the port-hole, I saw the long seas, of a soft blue, lifting in flashes, and chasing gently; the curl of them showed a failing wind. My port-hole

was a disc of brilliant morning. I peeped into the cuddy, and saw the ordinary seaman, Gouger, wiping down a bulkhead. I asked him to fetch me a bucket of salt-water, and he complied as briskly as though he had signed under me.

After a refreshing, soapless sea-wash, I pulled on my slop-wideawake, got into my slop-jacket, and went through the cuddy-door on to the quarter-deck. It was like turning a corner into a busy street. Five or six seamen were washing the decks down, scrubbing the plank, and sluicing the bright brine out of buckets. I looked aloft. The ship was clothed in canvas to the trucks; the yards were braced a little forward on the starboard tack; the weather-clue of the mainsail was up, and the vessel, slowly bowing, was moving like a body of sun-touched vapour over the waters.

It put new heart into my resolution to take command, when I saw how faithfully the ship's duty was being carried on, lords of themselves as the crew were; the sight gave me a high opinion of Brigstock's in-

fluence and power of mind. A great number of women were on deck—perhaps forty or fifty. I glanced swiftly here and there for Kate Darnley. Standing in the doorway of the cuddy, shadowed by the ledge or break of the poop, under which, exactly over my head, was a clock, indicating the hour of seven (guess-work time, of course, seeing they had been eleven days without an observation), I was not for some time noticed. The women stood here and there, looking out to sea, or talking, or marching up and down abreast, and some ten or twelve were walking upon the forecastle. I observed that the men bade them get out of the road, in the blunt speech and manner of the ocean. There was no familiarity in their manner of calling to the women, no laughter, no “chaff.” They went on with their work as though the taut eye of a chief-mate was overseeing them from the break of the poop, and the women would step aside to get out of the way of the water or the scrubbing-brushes, without any of those airs of alley or area coquetry you might have

expected in females of their class when addressed by men, and when all were in a situation unrestricted by quarter-deck government.

I found, on now looking, that I had been right in supposing the women's ages to vary from eighteen to thirty. Some were delicate, pretty girls; others coarse and heavy featured. One who stood not far from me was pale and flabby faced, with a goddess's figure. Hard by, stood one of your rolling, saucy, hand-on-hip, laughing girls with white teeth, and a dark, sharp, darting eye. You'll easily get the picture by figuring two score or so of cooks and housemaids, domestic servants of a superior sort; here and there a woman withdrawn, contemplative, pale, of a lady-like figure, hinting at the governess. Conceive these on the deck of a ship, moving in groups out of the way of the men who are washing down.

The shawls, bonnets, hats, and gowns were of many fabrics, shapes, and tints; most of the girls, it seemed, had come to sea in shabby finery. They flew feathers; Brum-

magem fallals danced in their ears, and brooched and pinned, and even ringed, some of them, and though they had been in one another's company for weeks, and by this time probably knew exactly the nature and extent of one another's wardrobes, they'd still glance critically at a passing figure, eye her from hat to heel, look from her to their own dress with downward sweeping glances, all critically, as though, by Heaven! they were taking the children for an airing in the park! as though the giant Life Guardsman was close at hand! as though, forsooth, all were well with the ship—captain and officers hearty and alert, the voyage as jolly as a drive to a tea-garden for a romp there!

But it's always thus with women: the troubles they find hardest to bear are those they expect.

As I stepped out of the cuddy-door, the female whom Kate Darnley had called Hannah Cobbs the matron, mounted the hatch-ladder, and looking up at the poop, nodded and smiled, and kissed her hand. I supposed there was some female friend there,

and, making three or four steps forward, I took a backward peep, but saw no one save Brigstock, who was standing at the head of the poop-steps. Good mercy! thought I, is it possible that *she's* his choice!

Her age was about forty; her thin, bile-darkened face was striking because of its long, lean, high-perched Roman nose; her eyes were a pale green; her lips a mere stroke; her forehead bare even to the suggestion of baldness; but upon either cheek, and against either ear, there sat a substantial curl of black hair like a beer-bottle with its neck gone. She was as flat as a wall up and down her; respectably attired in a large bonnet, and a grey gown whose cut from the waist was the outline of a candle-extinguisher.

She came out of the hatch, and walked towards the galley. Brigstock, seeing me, called out, "Good morning, sir." I answered with a flourish of my hand, and went along the deck looking here and there, for I wanted to see the ship. But by this time I was perceived by the girls, one of whom, a strange

little figure, very short, slightly hunch-backed, with a humorous squint, and a tight twist of scarlet hair at the back of her head under her hat, approached me in a sort of jumping walk across the deck, and planted herself in my path.

“Are you the capting, sir?” she cried, speaking harshly and thickly with a cold in her head.

“Not yet,” I replied, with a look round at the women who, fifteen or twenty of them, were gathering about me, even in the instant of the red-headed girl’s accost.

“We was booked to go to Orstralia,” she exclaimed, “and I s’y it’s a beastly shame that we ain’t to be taken there all along of our having no orficers, and the commin sailors findin’ creatures—women I’ll not call them—willing to take up and settle down with ’em in parts which isn’t in our way at all. What I s’y’s this,” she continued, with a fiery nod of her head at every word, “if we ain’t to be took to Orstralia, sail us back ’ome.”

“Miss Cobbs!” bawled Brigstock from the break of the poop, “there’s Miss ’Arvey at

her old joke of worrittin' again. Clear the road for the capt'n, will 'ee, Miss Cobbs? He can't answer no questions. And *won't* the ladies let him walk for his hentertainment?"

"Take us 'ome, I s'y," screamed Miss Harvey at Brigstock, with such a lift of hump and butting poise of head as transformed the poor soul into the unsightliest woman I had ever seen. "If yer don't mean to sail us to Orstralia, take us 'ome. That's what I s'y. Is there 'eer a man here savin' them I won't be so demeaned as to name that wishes to be carried into parts that ain't in the way we agreed to be took to? *I* know the law!" she screamed. "We've got the perfickest right to expect the new capt'n who stands here listenin' either to sail us to Orstralia or carry us 'ome."

"Do you 'ear what Miss 'Arvey says?" cried out a strongly built young woman with a scowling hanging face and the looks of a Jewess with her lemon cheeks and thick eyebrows. "*He* call hisself a man!" she yelled, pointing in a most insolent derisive manner

at Brigstock, and then bursting into a loud hysterical laugh. "We ask to be carried to Australia or took 'ome. Why don't him and his dirty sailors do it?"

"Now, Miss Harvey and you, Miss Marks, we don't want any trouble, and least of all *noise*, if *you* please," here exclaimed Miss Cobbs, the matron, thrusting in with the decision and peremptoriness of a female warder, speaking and looking indeed with an air as though she had learned her art in a prison. Her voice was high, keen and penetrating, and she stared as though she felt a power of control in her eyes. "The females in this ship have no call to make any trouble of what has happened. What's come about is not owing to Mr. Brigstock or the sailors. All who hear me, know that this ship has been unable to make any progress since we lost sight of the vessel the captain went into. We are now fortunate in meeting with a gentleman who will help us." She sank me an old-fashioned curtsy with a smirk and a coy droop of the eyelids. "If there are parties who intend to be set on

shore before they reach Australia, their wishes have nothing to do with those who desire to get to New South Wales. Perhaps, sir," she exclaimed, addressing me, "you will kindly tell these young persons that Australia's just as easily reached by the passage of those seas in which the sailors and others hope to settle themselves as by the ordinary course round the Cape of Good 'Ope."

"There are more roads than one to Australia," said I, struck by her volubility and readiness.

The women had gathered around in a crowd, of which Miss Cobbs and I formed the centre. Wherever I glanced, I met the gaze of dark eyes, blue eyes, brown eyes; some soft, appealing, timid; others on fire with curiosity and wonder, others fretful and distrustful. But who can find terms for the subtleties of women's faces?

"What I s'y is, fust land us girls in Australia, them as wishes to get there," exclaimed Miss Sarah Harvey, fastening her humorous squint upon the matron, though her posture

and looks wholly belied the suggestion of mirth in her perfidious eyes, "and then the others may do as they jolly-well please."

"Make room for the gentleman to see the ship," exclaimed Miss Cobbs.

I pressed forward, and drove clear of the poor girls, who broke up as before into parties, though they now talked loudly and confusedly. Brigstock, who had watched the proceedings on the main-deck from the poop, called to Miss Cobbs, who instantly turned and went to him. Here and there a sailor stooping at his work of coiling, scrubbing, swabbing, as it might be, would lift his head and eye me askant, but always respectfully, I thought, though I found an uneasy anxiety and curiosity in two or three of them. Those I had not before seen seemed decent, quiet men: much such as had swung in the fore-castle of the *Caroline*.

There yet remained a good store of live-stock in the ship; the coop was half full of poultry; some pigs were styed under the long-boat, and in the long-boat were a number of sheep. I looked into the galley, it was

large and clean, and furnished for the needs of many souls. The cook, as I supposed the man to be, stood with his back to the door, talking earnestly to a woman. She listened to him with her arms folded, and with a smile of affectionate attention. Her sharp black eyes above his shoulders saw me peering in. She touched his bare arm, and he turned to look at me. I passed on, tasting a strong smell of cocoa and baking bread in the wind, and gained the forecastle. A few women walking here eyed me earnestly, and looked as though they must speak. But I put on a figure-head of a face, keeping my eyes steadfastly bent seawards, and they held their peace.

A small barque was in sight on the weather bow, heading away from us close hauled into the north and west too far off to speak, though I thought I saw a spot of colour at her gaff end. She showed like some winter fancy of frost in the blue air, with sparkles upon her dead whiteness as of the coloured lights in snow upon ice. She was sliding along fast, and was probably a

Yankee, bound from round the Horn to a port in the States.

Being wishful so to view the *Earl of Leicester* as to get that sort of notion of the fabric which was to be obtained by looking at her at a distance, I sprang on to the bowsprit, and got out on to the jibboom end, where, catching hold of the stay, I hung some five or ten minutes, gazing aft. A noble, inspiriting sight! Far away beneath me, the metalled forefoot, bright with yellow sheathing, was shearing through the clear blue brine; the white water coiled away from the glittering stem in very hawsers of foam, their strands of glittering snow opening finger-like as they raced aft; the breeze was failing, but it was still a wind; the sunlight streamed full upon the canvas which swelled in breasts of cream past one another, crowding a wide space of the brilliant morning sky to where the gilt balls of the trucks invited the gaze to the pearly spaces of the royals.

I had a clear view of the decks under the arch of the courses, and saw the women

walking on the quarter-deck, and Brigstock watching me from the weather side of the poop, the helmsman right aft rising and falling against the blue line of the ocean, with much lovely tingeing of the many lustrous colours by the play of the shadows. Such a smart little ship as she looked from that jib-boom end, with nothing lacking but an after quarter-boat, the horizon, risen by my altitude to midway her mizzenmast, defining her into a very miracle of toy-like minuteness with its background of soft heaving blue! But what is there in ink to give you the spirit of what I saw, the salt smells of the ocean that sweetened it, the swell that gave a rhythm, and the wind a music to it, the soaring sun in the east that glorified it?

I slid inboards, went down the forecattle-ladder, and walked aft. Brigstock crossed to the lee side of the poop, and bawled out in his grave note, "What d'jer think of her, sir?"

I answered with a nod of appreciation. You need not go to sea long to learn how to talk to a sailor without speaking to him.

A little crowd of women had gathered at the galley-door, all with a sort of big hook-pot and tin dishes; it was breakfast-time for the 'tweendecks, and those girls were the mess-women for the day. I liked to see this discipline of Dr. Rolt's time kept going; it spoke well for Brigstock and the matron—for all hands, indeed.

As I made my way aft curiously but silently eyed by those whom I passed, I saw Kate Darnley. She stood close to the foot of the poop-ladder. Beside her, as though the group had been conversing, were three or four of the few refined-looking girls; the word for them would have been "genteel" in those times. They drew away as I advanced lifting my hat with a shoregoing bow. Kate's face was in a glow at sight of me.

"I looked about at once for you," said I, holding her hand somewhat demonstratively that all who watched us might understand she was my friend. "Come on to the poop. I don't like to think of you as making one of this muddle of slaveys and shop-joys. You must have a cabin in the cuddy there."

“No,” she answered quickly, and with resolution. “Favouritism of that sort would create ill feeling. But we can talk of that by-and-by. Are you in command?”

“Not yet.”

“Why not yet?” she exclaimed. “What are we to do without you?”

I looked at the clock over the cabin-door, and said—

“I have yet ten minutes to decide in. I promised Brigstock,” here I glanced up and saw him overhanging the rail, looking at me, “an answer by eight. What shall I tell him?” said I, smiling into her eyes which had grown spiritless with her changed countenance.

“Advise! You must take command, of course. Don’t you know the horrible situation we are placed in by being without officers? I don’t mean only the helplessness of the crew, who know nothing of navigation; the men have found women who are willing to settle down on an island with them, and their intention is to hunt about for a suitable spot without caring one jot,” she cried, with

some passion, "what becomes of those who are left in the ship."

"I know all about it," I answered softly and soothingly. "I'll take command, if it's only because you're on board. And you and I will arrange," said I still softly, with another glance up at Brigstock, "when the fools of seamen and women have left the ship, to carry her into safety."

"Mr. Morgan," sung down Brigstock, "ain't it eight bells yet?"

"Just upon it," I answered, "and I'm ready for you. We'll meet again shortly," said I to the girl, whose eyes were alight once more.

She went to the main-hatch for her breakfast in the 'tweendecks, and I stepped into the cuddy.

CHAPTER III.

I TAKE COMMAND.

THE table was prepared for breakfast. Nothing could be more seasonable as a picture to a sharp-set man than Gouger's spread of ship's beef, preserved mutton, biscuit, cheese, and ham. Brigstock overhead called out for Joe Harding to lay aft, and "Bill," he shouted, "give an eye to the ship, matey, whilst we breakfasts."

After a few minutes he came down the companion along with Joe Harding, at the same moment that Gouger entered by the cuddy-door, with cans of coffee and cocoa for us. Brigstock stalked up to me, Harding close behind him, and looking grimly, so severe was the gravity of the fellow with the anxiety in him, he said in a low, level, preaching voice, "Well, sir, how's it to be?"

“It’s eight bells, and I’ll tell you,” said I. “I accept the command of this ship.”

They both looked—Joe’s sneering whiskered face just behind Brigstock’s long, formal, grave countenance—as though they did not believe their ears; both men then smiled, and Brigstock said, “Mr. Morgan, give me yer’and.”

I shook hands with the man; Joe Harding then extended a large cold fist which I also shook. Whilst this was doing I saw, in the corner of my eye, the ordinary seaman Gouger, who stood in the cuddy-door, flourish his arm, and a moment after I heard some cheering and laughter in the neighbourhood of the galley.

“I’m glad indeed, and truly indeed am I glad,” exclaimed Brigstock. “Eh, Joe? What a lot of messing about that little word ‘yes’ often saves! Capt’n, we’re here to breakfast with yer this morning, to talk matters over. Afterwards it’s for you to give orders as to how things are to be carried on aft.”

I seated myself at that part of the table

where Captain Halcrow had been struck blind; Brigstock opposite where Dr. Rolt had been killed, and Harding alongside of him. The movement of the ship was gentle; the cuddy full of light, and the warm sweet wind of the sea gushed in through the open skylight with a humming sound like the moaning of doves. We fell to, and whilst we ate and drank we discoursed thus—

“I’m to carry this ship,” said I, “to an island in the Pacific?”

“That’s so,” exclaimed Brigstock.

“Have you no island of any sort in your head?”

“We must hunt for what we want,” answered Brigstock.

“We shall know what we like when we see it,” said Harding.

“Did you ever chance to cast your eyes upon a chart of the North and South Pacific Ocean, starting from about a hundred degrees of west longitude, and running on to about a hundred and thirty of east longitude? It’s all islands, Mr. Brigstock, there,

from the parallel of thirty degrees south to the same latitude north; a mighty big field to pick and choose from."

"Why yes; putting it that way, so it is," he answered, with his mouth full of preserved mutton; "but now you're in charge, sir, with a knowledge of them seas,"—I shook my head, but he went on,—“and good charts aboard, there'll be no difficulty, afore we're up with the Horn, in settling upon a corner of that field as you rightly tarm it, to hunt over. No call to chase the whole ocean. It's climate fust. That carries soil and all else we've got in our minds along with it."

"You go ashore," said I, "with a number of women who have never in their lives, perhaps, slept unsheltered. How do you mean to stow them till you can build a roof for their heads?"

"That's what we mean by climate," said Harding, wiping a smear of cocoa off his sourly-curled lips with the back of his hand, that was of the very colour of the stuff with weather and the tar-bucket. "The climate's all the roof that's needed till a village is

built. What are we to be told; that poor savages with nothen on fit to be took notice of, can sleep sound and keep their health under the stars, and hearty Englishwomen all wropped up in good clothes, an' strong as cows, are to sicken for the want of shelter?"

"No call to talk o' shelter," said Brigstock. "How much temporeery roofing may a man get out of a spare foretopsail?"

"To come to the business of my command: what's to be the discipline with regard to the emigrants?"

"It can't be bettered," exclaimed Brigstock.

"I believe *that*; always providing the crew keep clear of the women's quarters, and interfere with the girls no more than they did in Dr. Rolt's time."

"Then they'll interfere with them *less*," exclaimed Harding, with a sour nod. "Don't go and suppose, sir, that the doctor was *all* eye. Our choice is our choice; there'll be no interference."

"Trust our pardners to see to it!" said Brigstock, with a grave smile.

“I’ve had all night to think the matter over,” said I; “and I can find nothing to stipulate for. When you leave the ship, you give her up to me, and the rest is my affair. Is that so?”

“All so,” exclaimed Brigstock, with emphasis.

“It’s my intention to sail her to Sydney, when you’ve landed. I shall want men to work her.”

“We’ll pick up a crew of Kanakas as we go along,” said Harding.

“That’s possible. What put this scheme of settling an island into your head?” said I, looking at Brigstock.

“Well,” he answered, pronouncing his words very deliberately, “for a-many year now it’s been a sort of passion of mine to start a new constitootion. It was never one of them rich and shining fancies which lead a man out of his plain walk of life in chase; but things happenin’ as they’ve done aboard this ship, all hinnocently contrived, everything fallin’ out in the lawful and correct course of accidents, why, the occasion being

come, I grasped it, sir, and I put it to my mates as a splendid hopportunity to free theirselves from the galling restraints of civilization, and the hardship of having to work four and twenty hours a day in frost and wet and muck, for two pound ten and three pound ten a month. They seed it as I seed it. There was to be no wrong-doing. We put it to certain of the females. It was like giving them new hearts. They jumped with delight. Worn't it so, Joe? Didn't that there Nell Wilde of yourn cut a caper or two when you offered yourself? What was it they was to be given? An 'usband and a 'ome a-piece, a pick o' acres, nothen to do but to develop the settlement—instead of what?"—he paused, with a grimace of deep disgust. "Why, instead of being menials and slaves in a new country, a-drudging in Australia as they drudged in England, grate-cleanin', boot-cleanin', floor-sweepin', hup at cock-rise, bullied by a mistress as might have been a convick!"

He spoke with a twang that suggested the Sunday street-corner ranter. I watched

and listened to him with interest. Long as I had used the sea, I had never met quite the like of such a sailor as this, though I had been shipmate with some pious, respectable, worthy fellows too in my time.

“Have you ever read about Pitcairn Island?” said I.

He smiled and said, “Often; I could give you the yarn of that there mutiny and settlement off by heart. Old Adams is my model in this here scheme.”

“I guessed as much,” said I. “You choose Adams in preference to Fletcher Christian.”

“Recollect what Christian was shot for,” he answered. “D’jer remember the description the parties as met with them islanders gave of the settlement? how Adams’s daughter, a fine, handsome girl, clothed slightly, like a female in a play, stood waiting on the top of a hill for the men-of-war people to land, and how she led ’em through groves of cocoanut and bread-fruit trees to a beautiful picturesque little village? Them’s the words

of the yarn, if my memory ain't astray. Ha," he cried, fetching a deep breath, "hain't that description fetching enough for the likes of such folks as us and our pardners?"

"The whole twelve of you, then, are of one mind?"

"Ay. Twelve strands all laid up into a hawser of resolution."

"Do they and the women realize what they surrender by living on a lonely Pacific island?"

"Surrender!" cried Brigstock, whose dark eyes began to sparkle with animation. "Yes, sir. They realize that they surrender the grog-shop and the dancing-room, the Salls and Sukeys of the Highway and the outports, the crimp who drugs, and the owner who drowns men, and the capt'n and mates in whose eyes the sailor's a scoundrel dog, meant by Almighty God to be kicked, and cursed, and starved, too vile to be prayed for, so that he never hears a prayer, good only as a skinful of bones, which are to be worked, and bruised, and chilled, and starved through his rag-covered flesh, till they're

only fit to be tossed overboard with a stone in the hammock clues, and not a creature in the wide world to tell you whose child he was. Oh yes, we all know what we're a-going to surrender."

I was astonished by the man's rude eloquence, and judged of its influence upon the crew by observing how it worked in Joe Harding, who, when Brigstock ceased, threw an empty pannikin at the cuddy-door, and, without speech, fetched the table a savage whack with his fist.

"But it ain't surrenderin' only," continued Brigstock; "we're all sick of what we means to give up; so are our pardners. Ain't there to be never any change for a man? Often, when I look at a clock, I says to myself, 'Why are them hands always a-going round the same way? Is time to be read only in one fashion?' No sensible man can think of custom without feeling ill. We're born naked, and the rest is habit. I'm for a constitootion where habit shall be all nature, just as the baby's all nature. Likewise I'm for founding the religion of my constitootion

upon 'Oly Writ. What's a Christian nowadays? Ain't he a cove that believes in everything but what's to be found in the Bible?"

"It's the sameness that's killing," exclaimed Harding. "Every day's like a shilling, and a bad'un at that; head one side, tail t'other; whichever side ye tarn it—there it is; head *or* tail."

"It may end in your joining of us, Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock. "I see you're already bekknown to as nice a little party as there is aboard."

"She's a lady, the daughter of a clergyman, an intimate friend, driven by poverty into crossing the sea for bread. Her being in the ship increases my anxiety as to the behaviour of your men."

"I assure you, sir," he exclaimed earnestly, "there's no call to be in the least uneasy."

"More like t'other way about, I allow," said Harding. "It's us as wants protecting."

"What's the discipline?" I asked.

"We've kep' to the doctor's lines," answered Brigstock. "The females break-

fast at eight, dines at half-past twelve, and get their supper at half-past five. Miss Cobbs, the matron, as she's called, is a fust-rate 'and; everything under her moves as soft and quiet as ile. She was born to help a man to start a new constitootion. I fancied her the hinstant I saw her. She's my pardner in this here traverse," said he, viewing me gravely. He added, "More'n I'd got a right to expect as a plain working man, whose looks ain't perhaps quite what they was twenty year ago."

I held my face steady, though with difficulty. An inopportune smile must be a perilous thing with men so consumedly serious as those two fellows.

"None of the crew, I suppose, are ever allowed in the women's quarters?"

"None. Not likely. All twelve of us has got the same as a wife there. D'jer think I'd relish hearing of my mates cruising about in the dark below in the neighbourhood of Miss Cobbs? Every man hain't got the same tone of voice, but we can all sing out when we're hurt. What's my poison ain't

going to prove meat for Joe there. You take it, Mr. Morgan, that if your young pardner was ashore under her father's roof she couldn't be safer than she is here."

"And perhaps not so safe," exclaimed Harding, gruffly, "if you're to believe all that's told of what happens in them country vicarages. Not long afore we sailed, some chap at the house I lodged at, read a piece in a paper about a parson's daughter as had been run away with by a nobleman's footman. She shammed it were his doing, when they was brought up charged with pawning the church silver. But letters was read in the court-house a-proving beyond argeyment that both parties was equally willin'."

"Well then, sir," exclaimed Brigstock, making as though to leave the table, "it's onderstood that you take charge of the ship?"

"Ay; setting those ashore who wish to leave her, and then proceeding."

"The course now to be headed is straight for the Horn," said he.

"It's the road to the South Seas. I shall

want to get at the ship's stock of provisions and fresh water."

"Say the word, and it's done, sir," said Brigstock.

"We'll start at half-past nine."

"There's nothen to keep me here, I think, is there, Mr. Brigstock?" said Harding, who on getting a shake of the head from the other, left the cuddy.

"Mr. Morgan," said Brigstock, after looking at me for a few moments very earnestly. "You now perceive that our intentions are hinnocent an' honest."

"There's nothing to find fault with. I'm not for holding that you're still bound by the articles, seeing how things are; but I doubt if the lawyers would let you touch the cargo."

"We'll take for our necessities only, and the value shan't exceed our wages. 'Sides, shan't we have saved the ship for the owners by putting you in command, and working her till Australia's almost aboard?" Then, finding me silent, he said in his low, level, deep voice, "Mr. Morgan, in giving you this

trust, us men of course have full confidence in you."

"I'll carry you to the South Pacific, where it's for you to find an island. Nothing more's expected?"

"Nothen."

"From me, I mean. From you I shall want this—the women must be as faithfully and jealously protected as though armed sentries were betwixt them and the fore-castle."

"The men know my views, and they'll larn yours," said he. "I tell you, sir, there's nothen to be afraid of in *that* way."

I gave him a nod, and, our conversation having ended, he went on deck, and I stepped into my cabin.

I lingered lost in thought, my eyes fixed on the sea that swept trembling brimful of light past the circle of cabin-window. I had reflected long and passionately before deciding; yet, now that I had accepted command, the responsibility weighed upon me as though it had been new and violently sudden. But I was content; I had charge of a fine

ship, and it would be my fault if the post proved barren; I might be the instrument of rescuing a great crowd of poor women from a situation of enormous peril; I should probably be the means of preserving a noble vessel. I had good reasons to hope that the men would prove decorous in their relations with the 'tweendecks, and concern for their own safety and their resolution to carry the ship into the Pacific should go the whole length in keeping them obedient. In a word, I was satisfied.

One thing, however, was plain; I must quickly settle the whereabouts of a suitable island, for I had no notion of keeping this ship, full of women, cruising about in search of a site for a forecastle Utopia.

Being without a watch, I went on to the quarter-deck to see what o'clock it was, and found the hour just half-past nine. The women had long ago finished breakfast, and nearly all of them were on deck, sitting, lounging, flitting; their tongues wagged ceaselessly. Here and there sat one with a book. Three of them were talking to the

same number of sailors on the forecastle ; I guessed them “ pardners,” as Brigstock called them.

Kate Darnley stood alone to leeward of the main-deck ; she was upon a coil of rope which raised her head above the rail, and she was looking down at the wreaths and bells of white foam now languidly streaming past. The heavier canvas was hollowing in to the bowing of the vessel with light reports, like the explosions of small arms up aloft.

The women stared at me very hard, many breaking off in their speech. The female with the club nose and merry cast of eye approached, with protest and passion strong and hot in her face. To escape her I went on to the poop, and when from the break of it I looked forward so as to take in the ship, Kate Darnley turned and saw me. I pulled off my hat, and going down to leeward, called along the line of bulwark-rail, “ I hope to join you by-and-by.” She gave me a bow with some colour, and I noticed that many of the women looked at her, and spoke

one to another, evidently "making remarks," as they call it.

Brigstock stood near the wheel, talking to the man at it. Before singing out to him, I sent a glance round the ocean—the barque had vanished—nothing was in sight. I reckoned that the failing of the breeze might signify the speedy breathing of the trade-wind. South-east it was a bit hazy, with fibrine lines of cloudlike rays of light and white as milk in the shining morning, striking out of what I judged might be a bank of vapour invisible in the dimness. Yet the wind hung still to the north of west, scanting even as I stood looking, and the slop slop of the water lifting to the side and falling back was a sure sign of an approaching lull.

Brigstock now coming to me, I told him to get the fore and main hatches open, and call Joe Harding aft to keep a look-out. But before entering the hold, I desired to inspect the 'tweendecks; accordingly, followed by Brigstock, I descended the wide main-hatch ladder and entered the women's quarters.

Under and round the hatchway there was plenty of light; but the forepart was so gloomy that the sight fresh from the day failed to easily determine outlines.

I found here what I had not expected to see—a row of plain, white, bulkheaded cabins, rudely put together, such as you'd find in a troopship of that day—they ran on either hand half way along the 'tweendecks; the ship's sides then lay exposed, scaffolded with sleeping-shelves in double tiers. Down the centre, betwixt the cabins and open bunks, ran a narrow table framed with rude benches of deal plank on short, sawed-off, timber uprights. The smell of newly sawn wood still lingered.

A few women were sitting at the table, two of them writing, the others sewing. After I had stood a minute looking around, Miss Cobbs came out of the first of the cabins on the port side. She ducked me a curtsy, and then looking at Brigstock, exclaimed, "Thomas, I hope we may now call the gentleman captain?"

"Yer may, 'Annah," answered Brigstock,

taking her sharp elbow in the yellow hollow of his hand as she came and stood beside him, rubbing shoulders with a cat-like slope of her figure. "It's now Captain Morgan of the *Earl of Leicester*. There's to be nothen in the past to discomfort our satisfaction, and the future's to be hall plain sailing."

"Miss Cobbs, I shall count upon your helping me to keep the routine of Dr. Rolt's time going tautly as it was worked when he was alive," said I. "I pretty well see what the rules are. Let everything be sweet and clean down here, Miss Cobbs. Turn the women up regularly to air their bedding. You're skipper of this part of the ship; I look to you to help us along through a very queer dilemma."

"Captain Morgan, you may depend upon my doing heverything that lies in my power," she answered, with a mincing, finical, "superior" air, whilst her mere line of mouth parted in a maidenly smirk as she looked at me, letting her eyes sink down my figure.

I was too much in earnest to suffer any old fooling and what I may call sausage-curl coquetry in Miss Cobbs, and began to question her sharply and sternly. I wanted to know her methods, what were the rules as to the washing down of the 'tweendecks, at what time of day, and how often, the bedding was aired? I'll not trouble you with the questions I put to her—she answered me intelligently and respectfully; shrewdly and swiftly appreciating my earnestness and attitude of command. Brigstock listened with a grave smile; the man appeared both impressed and pleased. The women at the table ceased to write and sew to hearken to us.

Whilst I talked, a couple of seamen came below and opened the hatch which conducted into the hold; it lay, of course, right under the main-deck hatch. I meant to see more of the 'tweendecks, however, before going into the question of the stores.

“Let me look at those cabins,” said I.

Miss Cobbs threw open the door of her own berth. This interior had been specially

fitted up for the matron, and contained a single sleeping-shelf and the conveniences of a bedroom. The other cabins were larger, and each contained a couple of shelves for the reception of six women. The shelves were divided into three by coamings or thin strips of plank, that each sleeper might rest clear of her companions.

“Where does Miss Darnley sleep?” said I.

“In the fore-end yonder, sir,” answered Miss Cobbs.

“Upon an open shelf there?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Why should some have cabins and some open shelves, when all should fare alike?”

“I don’t know. This is how we found the ship fitted; but the open shelves are the beds most favoured. The women don’t like being boxed up, more particularly when it’s hot, like now. There’s been a great deal of uncomfortable feeling caused by them open shelves there.”

I walked slowly forwards; the women at the table rose as I approached. One of them, a tall, fair, dough-faced girl, with amber

hair and pale blue eyes and a willowy figure, and large red hands eloquent of the grate and the doorstep, exclaimed in a trembling voice, "I beg your pardon, sir; if you're the new captain, may I ask a question?"

"Now, Miss Dobree," whipped in Miss Cobbs, her clear, hard voice shearing betwixt me and the girl with an actual suggestion of the cutlass in the steel-like sweep of the tone past the ear, "Captain Morgan is not here to answer questions; he's merely come to look round."

"What do you wish to say?" I exclaimed.

"What's to be done with us, sir?" answered the girl, and even as she spoke her eyes bubbled.

"I shall carry you to your destination," said I. "Presently I'll call representatives of you aft, and reassure you, I hope. Don't cry; it's all right."

"The wrong's this," exclaimed a young woman at the other side of the table—a powerfully built girl of some eight and twenty, wild with thick, black, finger-swept hair and heavy eyebrows, but coarsely good-

looking, with a sort of taking charm, too, in the mutinous glare of her black eyes, richly fringed, and steady in their stare as a portrait's: "Here's Miss Cobbs paid to look after us, and she's one of the first to go over to the sailors. Oughtn't she to know better? Aren't the years she's come to called the age of discretion?" She looked with audacious scorn at Miss Cobbs.

"Hold your saucy tongue!" cried the matron. "My powers are none the less because things are not as they were when we sailed. You'll do no good to yourself by insulting me. Get on deck, and cast your swinish temper into the sea!"

The young woman muttered to one of her companions, and then laughed passionately. Miss Cobbs took no notice, and we walked into the fore part of the 'tweendecks.

Here the interior had the look of a prison. I once boarded a convict ship at Hobart Town, and the fittings of that vessel reminded me of what I now saw. A girl was asleep in a bunk in the starboard lower tier. Her hair had been loosened with the friction

of the pillow ; it lay upon her brow and neck in such a shadow or dye of raven blackness that, by contrast, the white face looked like light itself. Miss Cobbs spoke. I whispered, "Speak soft." Never before had the sense of the sanctity of sleep been keener in me. Miss Cobbs whispered that the girl had complained of a splitting headache. Well, or ill, she looked as if resting in the touching calm of death. No voice now sounded in those 'tweendecks ; nothing was to be heard but the creaking of the bulkheads. In that brief pause, vexed only by the weak, fine-weather noises of the fabric, I viewed that lonely, sleeping figure. Lonely she looked. Not that she was lonelier than the others, but her solitariness was made appealing by her lying there asleep, and by her being the only figure in those rows of shelves. Whose child was she ? What were her hopes ?

If ever ship needed a commander, this was she ! Poor Kate Darnley ! thought I, glancing round the scaffolding of bed places. To be sure it would be for the refined, well-bred

lady, the woman of instincts fastidious with breeding and education, to suffer and sicken in such a dungeon-like glimmering bedroom as this, with its pretty company of the kitchen and the scullery, regaling one another with area memories, and recollections of the Sunday evening out.

I walked aft in silence, Miss Cobbs in my wake. Brigstock stood at the open hatch.

“We’ll deal with the fresh-water stock first,” said I.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "PARDNERS."

By half-past eleven I had got at all I wanted to find out. I was an old hand at stowage, and knew the art of gauging. This was the second time since I sailed from England that I had found occasion, for one reason or another, for ascertaining the stock of fresh water, and now the stores of victuals. I did not choose to trust to Brigstock's report. I crawled about the fore-hold, then over the water-casks stowed under the main-deck, then overhauled the after-hatch, and with a paper full of figures rudely scratched by lantern-light, I went on deck, made for my cabin, where in five or ten minutes I washed and trimmed myself, and carried my sextant on to the poop.

Whilst taking an observation, I smiled at the eagerness with which I was watched by the women. They crowded up the poop-ladder to look at me ; they swarmed upon the bulwarks, more or less gracefully swinging by the rigging. A crowd stared from the head of the fore-castle-ladder.

On making the hour noon, I sung out for eight bells to be struck in the usual words. Instantly one of the seamen who had stationed himself beside the bell abaft the mainmast, struck it, and along with the chimes there ran a very musketry of hand-clapping, accompanied by a chorus of shrieking cheers, startling to listen to. Did you ever hear women cheer ? Never did I before that time nor since. It was like the wailing and crying of a hundred children in pain and terror, nothing whatever jubilant or gratulatory in it ; the wildest, most inhuman expression imaginable of pleasure and hope renewed ; something to sound pitifully and frightfully by night in one of the deeper hushes of the sea.

I bade Brigstock put the clock on the

cuddy front right, and went below to work out my sights and deal with the figures I had brought up out of the hold. This business occupied me till hard upon one. The quantity of fresh water was far greater than I had imagined. It was evident the commander had not designed to call at the Cape.

This discovery pleased me. We should, of course, have found no difficulty in filling our water-casks, but unless we hove to off something barren like the *Salvage*, discovered a fountain there, and rafted our casks for it, the scheme the sailors had in hand would certainly be blown by the women. At no port would it be possible to keep the Pacific project secret; in which case some British consul or other would come upon the scene, dismiss me from the command for all I could tell, to put a friend of his in my room, despatch the ship to her New South Wales port, and leave me to kick my unoccupied heels about till I found an *aforemast* berth, or something of that sort.

No! The closer I looked into my present

situation the better I was pleased with it. In fact, I was already as much in earnest as Brigstock that he and his company of men and women, the rude forefathers and grandmothers of some tiny South Sea commonwealth, should go ashore upon an island and leave me to manage the rest.

I marked the situation of the ship upon the track chart, and went on deck to look at the weather before eating. The cabin-table was being prepared for the midday meal by Gouger, who was now to regularly serve in my end of the ship. The table looked smart and glistening enough with damask and glass and plate; indeed, the equipment of the vessel was handsome throughout, down to the most trifling particulars. I'd often wondered that so smart, well-found a craft should be employed in this low trade; but then, those were bad times in shipping; wages were poor, the carrying traffic overdone, freights low. No doubt the owners of the *Earl of Leicester* were glad enough to fill her up with a cargo of women and the Colonial stores she carried.

Looking at the table as I passed on my way on deck, I resolved to bring Kate Darnley into this cabin, out of the twilight and alley-chatter of the 'tweendecks. Here she would feel herself the lady she was. Here she would sit at a breezy table under a bright skylight, and eat and drink of all that was best in the ship's larder. I was now in command, I was supreme head. My will was the will of the quarter-deck, than which there is nothing more despotic the wide world over. Kate Darnley is my friend, thought I; why shouldn't I make her a first-class passenger?

On gaining the deck, I found a calm upon the sea; the sails were beating the masts to the long-drawn rolls of the ship upon the swell that had come on a sudden chasing out of the south-east. I told Brigstock to stand by for a shift of wind; the mainsail was already hauled up, and there was nothing to be done but wait. The women were below at dinner; up through the wide main-hatch came the clatter of crockery and the shrewd hum of female voices. A couple of women,

holding mess utensils, stood at the galley-door, talking to some of the seamen. I stepped to the break of the poop, and—after gazing sternly at the group, during which the sailors shifted a bit uneasily from one leg to another, pulling their pipes from their mouths, and sinking the animation in their gestures and voices, though the girls gabbled without heeding my surveyal, looking my way once or twice, but talking with tosses of the head and laughter all the same—I called to Brigstock—

“Who are those women?”

“That there big un,” said he, “with the projecting teeth, is Emma Grubb, Isaac Coffin’s pardner. T’other, with the great red arms, is Kate Davis, Jupe Jackson’s choice.”

“Coffin’s that man there with the moustache?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And Jackson’s the short fat fellow with the pig’s eyes?”

“That’s Jupe,” he answered.

I had nothing to say. Since those women

were "pardners" of two of the men who were yarning at the galley-door, I could not interfere; the contention of the crew would be that they had a right to talk with the women who had agreed to become their wives, providing they behaved decorously and did not meddle with the others; and I must look for resistance and difficulties I should be mad to challenge if I attempted to arrest their intercourse.

As far as I could judge, Jack had chosen with strict regard to his old traditions. There were several pretty women amongst the emigrants. Some of them might have been glad to accept the sailors as husbands, and welcomed with delight the forecastle scheme of an ocean paradise of capsized customs. But Jack, to be sure, must pick out the ugliest and the coarsest. Emma Grubb was as rough a wench as ever I saw—and many have I seen—a smack apprentice in petticoats! whilst Kate Davis, with arms as massive as a drayman's legs, and a wide spread of flat, coarsely cut, somewhat meaningless face, framed with hair like yarns of

coir rope, might have passed as a young butcher in his sister's clothes.

Yet Jack might be right, after all. Those Kates and Emmas—not your niminy-piminy, fair-browed lollipops of the counter and the servants' 'all—are your true mothers for a British settlement. Broad-backed, deep-bosomed lasses, ugly as sin, but hearty as mules. The proper sort of creatures to dig, to hew, to help build, to breed and to rear. I turned away with a laugh after another look. Those arms of yours, Kate Davis (thought I), once the halliards were within your grasp, would hoist the flag of our country moon-high. 'Tis the likes of you, you beauty, who do the real work of colonization.

“D’jer mind letting us know where the ship is?” said Brigstock.

I named the vessel's position.

“And the course for the Horn?”

“Is the course she's heading on,” I answered.

He smiled gravely, and turned his dark eyes in a slow, thoughtful stare round the sea.

Just then it fell a glass calm, with a sound in the sudden dying of the wind like a strange strong sigh running through the atmosphere. The canvas came into the masts with a single clap. It made you think of the ship sucking in her cheeks in expectation. In a minute I saw a light blue shadow on the sea-line off the port bow, under some cold streaks of lavender cloud there. And as the wind came along, I watched the trade-cloud rising like balls of powder-smoke from the mouths of cannon. The water darkened and crisped into wrinkles, and broke in quick flashes; but the blue sky was shaded with sailing vapour to past our mastheads ere the breeze took us.

The wind found us ready trimmed with boarded tacks, taut bowlines, and yards well fore and aft, though not "sweated," as we say, for I was ever of opinion that to make a good passage you must make a fair wind. The women came out of the 'twendecks when they heard the sailors singing out at the ropes, and filled the ship with the life of fluttering coloured raiment, and trembling

feathers, and streaming bonnet-ribbons like Irish pennants. This was the first of the south-east trade-wind, and it came fresh in its earliest breath, and hardened quickly; till at half-past one hands were aloft furling the three royals. The flying-jib halliards had been let go, and we were waiting till the light canvas was stowed to take the great mainsail off her.

All aslant, the white brine bursting from her weather bow, dipping steadily through the seas which ran with little weight as yet, the fine ship smoked through it in her sudden meteoric flight, a sheet of spreading foam hissing to leeward, silver fires flaming from everything bright upon her decks, her gilded globes of trucks shining like stars at each masthead. In that time of waiting for the men to haul up the mainsail, I found myself admiring the picture of that ship as something more shapely and glittering, richer in hue, more radiant where all was whiteness than any fabric I had ever sailed in, or that my imagination could have figured.

I did not leave the deck till I had seen all

necessary sail shortened. Gouger had reported dinner half an hour before. Harding was left in charge of the deck, and I entered the cuddy, followed, after a little while by Brigstock, wondering when I was to find an opportunity for spinning a yarn with Kate Darnley, surprised too by the heap of business which had kept me occupied all the morning.

I had taken my seat, and was pegging away when Brigstock arrived; they had killed me a fowl. That and a piece of boiled pork was to supply me with as good a meal as the skipper of a trader was like to get in those days of pig and old horse with a mess of fresh pork at intervals when a hog was despatched. Brigstock stood at the foot of the companion-steps, and said—

"If it's not your wish, capt'n, that I should eat aft here along with you, say the word. I'm a plain sailor, and no mate. You're a gemman, and it might be that you'd object to sit down with the likes of me."

I answered by pointing to a chair, and at once helped him to some fowl and pork.

"I may tell you," said he, looking at his

plate, "that the crew have nothen to say against my eating aft of such vittles as is put upon this table. Of course they recognize me as mate, and a mate's got a right to live in the cabin. Still, as I'm but a fok'sle hand myself, I shouldn't feel heasy in partaking of sooperior grub if my mates thought it wasn't fair."

"I respect your shipmatish views," said I; "but you don't want me to tell you that all hands can't live aft."

"No, sir. But my notions of the laws of property don't allow of my enjoying what the rest of us ain't getting. I dorn't say it can be helped *here*. The only way I can reconcile this here living with my conscience and principles," he added, forking up the leg of fowl I had helped him to, "is to fare just as they do forward. I'll keep this piece of pork; this here leg I'll retarn," and so saying he put it on the dish.

Come, thought I, this, if not an honest, is at all events a *fair* man.

"In your new settlement," said I, "all are to fare alike?"

"No, sir; a man'll fare according as he produces. But we shall all *be* alike. We're all alike when we're dead and ain't of no use; I'm for being alike whilst we're alive and *are* of use."

"You'll find that the little potatoes will get to the bottom quite in the old manner."

"Ay, but they're potatoes all the same. Joe or Jim ain't to forfeit his claims upon us as a man because he ain't born with Jack's hintellect or Jupe's cunning. You can't have a family that's *all* big brothers. In our settlement we'll judge of a man as yer judge of a clock—by his works. Do 'e keep time? We ain't agoin' to quarrel with a man for bein' a three an' sixpenny Dutch clock 'stead of a sixty guinea chreenometer. Do 'e keep time *at* three an' sixpence? That's it."

I saw an argument on politics, religion, political economy, and other such things strong in the man's grave face and slow earnest eyes, and changed the subject by explaining how my calculations as to the stock of water and provisions had worked out. I then said with a glance at the table

that looked very hospitable indeed with the spirits, the wine, and the bottled beer which Gouger had set upon it—

“I mean to bring Miss Kate Darnley to live aft here.”

“Will that be hadvisable?” he said.

“Why not?” I asked quickly, ill-pleased with the remark that was like running athwart the hawse of my command.

“Wouldn’t it lead to ill feeling?” said he, masticating at the rate of about a bite every two seconds. “There’s Miss Cobbs. She’d naturally wonder, if your pardner was here, that she wasn’t called aft too. That ’ud come personal as ’twixt her and me. The sailors ’ud say we dorn’t want to live aft ourselves, but our pardners are emigrant folk the same as Miss Darnley, no better and no worse, so far as her situation goes, and we’ve got nothen to do with her hextraction; and if Miss Darnley’s to live and eat in the cabin, our pardners shall take up their quarters there too! They *might* reason this way; I dorn’t say they’d talk so.”

I reflected and said, “You may be right;

yet the services I am rendering you give me certain claims; and if it's my wish that Miss Darnley should live here, you and the crew should consent."

"I beg you worn't insist upon it, sir," he exclaimed, helping himself to a glass of water—he had drunk nothing but half a gill of rum, diluted into a pannikin full of almost tasteless amber fluid. "All's going along smooth. All's likely to keep so. I'm for leaving well alone. 'Sides, would it be the right thing for the young party to come and live solitary aft here away from the rest of the females?"

All the while we talked the women on the quarter-deck were coming and going as before at the door and windows, staring at us in knots of pale, eager faces. I glanced up at the skylight and said, not choosing to pursue the subject of Kate's living aft—

"Now that the ship has a commander, the poop, I presume, is to be kept for the use of him and the mates?"

"Ain't that as you'd wish it, sir? Us men are for carrying on everything exactly •

as it was under Dr. Rolt and Captain Halcrow."

"Are the crew going to grumble if I bring Miss Darnley on to the poop?"

"No; she's your friend; you must talk with her somewhere. As master of the vessel, your place is aft."

I looked at the man attentively, and thought to myself: there are qualities in that rude, illiterate, unpicturesque sea-dog that, unless I mind my eye, will as certainly dominate *me* as they've dominated the crew. Pity for him that he'd never learnt navigation in his time—what better man to take charge of a ship? He should have hailed from some New England Quaker settlement, so slow he was, so wary, exact, yet capable of lying like a pickpocket on occasion, that is, when business made demands upon his judgment, though skilled in the art of forgiving himself and discovering reasons that could never fail to convince his conscience.

"Mr. Brigstock," said I rising, "when this table is clear, get Miss Cobbs to select certain

women to represent the emigrants, and let them assemble here."

"Ay, ay, sir," he answered, and walked straight on to the quarter-deck.

I was half an hour in my cabin; whilst there I heard some of the women coming into the cuddy. When I stepped out, I found twelve of them at the table. The first my eye fell on was Kate Darnley. Another was the coarsely handsome, wild-haired, powerfully built young woman, Alice Perry; she grinned with a very glare of strong white teeth on meeting my eyes, and nodded cheekily. A third was Miss Cobbs the matron. She stood at the foot of the table, evidently waiting for me to appear.

I stepped forth, holding a chart of the world; the girls eyed it as though it had been a loaded blunderbuss. I at once shook hands with Kate, and placed myself at her side. Brigstock overhead looked down at us through the open skylight. The quarter-deck was crowded with women, who filled the doorway and blocked the windows; but some one, probably Miss Cobbs, had stationed

a seaman to guard the entrance. He stood doggedly in the doorway, with his back upon the girls, one of whom, on catching sight of me, snapped out shrilly over his shoulder, "Why ain't us all to be let in?"

I wished to get through this business, and addressed the girls at once.

"There was no need to bring all the ladies in here. You'll repeat to the others what I'm going to say. I want to make your minds easy as to your ultimate arrival in Australia. I'm in charge of this ship, and hope to see my way when we've put Mr. Brigstock and his party ashore, to carry you safely to Sydney."

"How long's it going to take?" asked one of the girls.

"Miss Wright, you're not to interrupt," cried Miss Cobbs.

"It's along of *you* that the respectable ones amongst us are being made sick and ill with worritting and anxiety," said the young woman, Alice Perry, darting a mutinous, flashing look at Miss Cobbs, with a sudden projection of her head that produced

the impression of a leap. "What's the like of *you* got to do with marrying? You ought to be at your prayers, thinking of your soul. You're old enough to concern yourself that way," she added, with a shrill laugh.

"Captain Morgan, I must ask for your protection against that himpudent woman," exclaimed Miss Cobbs. "If she persists in insulting me, I'll seek Mr. Brigstock's protection," and she bestowed a cold, pale, dangerous nod on Alice Perry.

"Am I to proceed?" said I, looking round at the women.

"She's a saucy, bad-tempered woman, but honest and good natured," whispered Kate.

Alice Perry got up and came to my side, and said, pointing at Miss Cobbs, "Her very looks riles me. She's hated by all as ain't of her party. Oh, I'm not afraid of you nor of your old Tommy Brigstock either," she shouted, looking up at the skylight. "When I'm in earnest, the fur flies, as the cat says."

Some laughter in the doorway and windows attended this; the sailor's figure

shook whilst he hid his mouth with his bare arm.

Brigstock, who all this while was standing above, shouted down, "I'd advise yer to keep a civil tongue in yer mouth. I don't want to fall foul of yer; but I'll ask no man's leave to protect my pardner from the himperance of such trollops as you."

"Oh dear! oh dear! let's hear what the captain has to say," exclaimed one of the girls, a mild-looking creature, with a gentle voice, dressed in well-worn black.

I unrolled the chart upon the table. "Here's the world. Gather around, young ladies, and look for yourselves."

They came together in a squeeze of eager figures—some were without hats or bonnets—here and there a cheap ring glittered upon a toil-reddened hand. I don't know what idea had governed Miss Cobbs in her choice of these women as representatives; it might be that they illustrated the several walks of the emigrants. The mild young person in black, I afterwards heard, was a governess.

Pointing to the chart with a ruler, I bade

the girls observe that the distance to Sydney, New South Wales, by Cape Horn, was much the same as the distance to it by way of the Cape of Good Hope.

"Why's the one road always took, then?" inquired Miss Alice Perry.

"Because of the winds," said I.

She stared at me distrustfully.

"I've told the young ladies, time out of mind, that there's no difference worth naming in the distance," said Miss Cobbs.

"But we've got to hunt about for an island, haven't we?" said a girl.

"Yes. That won't take long, and a few weeks, more or less, must signify nothing to people in your situation. Why, without a navigator in command, you might have been blown about the ocean for days and days, so ending as never more to be heard of."

"That's quite true, and ought to reconcile us to what's happened," exclaimed Kate.

"We hope the captain's telling you something worth hearing?" cried a voice at one of the windows.

"If certain parties chooses to act like

fools, who cares?" said one of the women. "We took passage in this ship for Australia, and we must go there and git there, and let them who want to live on an island with common sailors, hunt about by themselves."

"It'll be base to keep us poor girls at sea longer than there's need for. And what the sailors represent ain't true neither," cried a streaky-faced girl. She was miserably thin, and trembled from head to foot with nervousness. "They say there's no chance of girls getting married in Australia."

"Old Tommy read out a piece about it," whipped in Alice Perry. "One of them lies yer to believe true, 'cos it's in print. Ha! ha!"

"But Mr. Brigstock's got to discover folks know the truth for themselves," said the girl whom Perry had interrupted, diving into the pocket of her dress, and bringing out a purse, which she opened with agitation pitiful to behold. "This was copied out of a newspaper, and sent to me by my uncle." And in a high-pitched voice, shivering with nerve, she read out this—

"Wide Bay and Burnett Districts.

"THE ORPHAN GIRLS.

"To the Editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

"GENTLEMEN,

"Whilst the Government pretend they do not know what to do with these girls, they entirely neglect the northern and rapidly increasing Wide Bay and Burnett River Districts. On the Burnett, Severn, Dawson, and Boyne Rivers, there is a large entirely male population. There are not more than six women in the whole district, and those have arrived within the last six months. If a vessel was despatched immediately to Wide Bay with two hundred of these girls, I have no hesitation in stating the whole of them could be married in two months.

"Yours, etc.,

"A BUSHMAN."

Her shaking hand dropped the purse, and, after pocketing it, she sank back as though in a swoon.

"I'll say again that I don't believe a word

of it!" exclaimed Miss Cobbs, folding her arms, and tightening her lips into a line thin as a pen-stroke.

"But we're not all going out with ideas of getting married," said a girl, remarkable for the burning scarlet of her scanty hair. "I'm one of most who thinks only of a situation and wages."

"Will Miss Cobbs tell us there's no situation to be got, and no wages to be 'ad?" said Alice Perry, with a sneer.

"I can tell Alice Perry that situations are by no means plentiful in Sydney, nor in Melbourne, neither; and wages not one whit better than she can get at 'ome," exclaimed Miss Cobbs.

"Cooks 'ave twenty-two pound," said the scarlet-haired girl. "'Ousemaids fifteen, and general servants twenty-six. So I was told, and am emigrating in consequence. But I think we've been put into this ship only to be deceived and drowned."

I was growing tired of all this. "See here, ladies," said I, flourishing my ruler over the chart, "here's the situation of the

ship to-day. There's Australia, d'ye see? Instead of going round to it by this cape, we'll steer to it by that. All these dots signify islands, and one of them will be the island Mr. Brigstock's party want. Mr. Brigstock and I will take care to be quick in finding it. Suppose that island's situated here," said I, pointing. "Look what a straight course we can make for Sydney, which is *there*! We shall procure the help we need amongst the islands, and the ship will arrive at Sydney a month or so later than her date."

I rolled up the chart to let the women know I had nothing more to say. They had no notion, however, of terminating this interview. They wanted to know if I was captain? I answered I was. Couldn't captains do whatever they pleased? No; they could do only what was right. Warn't it my duty to sail the ship direct to Sydney, and see the women safe on shore, leaving those who had taken up with the common sailors to find an island for themselves? I answered that one condition of my command

was, I should help Brigstock and his party to find an island, and land them on it. If I refused to do this, the men would not have me as their captain.

This raised a hubbub. All talked at once. It was impossible to understand the questions screeched at me. I saw Alice Perry eyeing Miss Cobbs with a nasty face of temper. The scarlet-haired girl flourished her fist, yelping out her questions and protests in a voice like a lap-dog's bark. The confusion was increased by the women on the quarter-deck calling to those within. To silence and end it all, I told Kate to go on deck by way of the companion-ladder, and re-entered my cabin.

CHAPTER V.

A CHAT WITH KATE.

BY-AND-BY, hearing nothing, I looked out and found the cuddy empty. I went on deck, and was immediately accosted by Brigstock.

“There’s nothen to be done by reasoning kindly. Might as well try to rear a dog on cabbage as to make some of them gurls see straight,” said he.

“They want to get to Australia.”

“What’s to stop ’em? I never kept a servant myself, but I’ve always onderstood that cholera’s mild as a plague compared to ’em. If these are the rig’lar style of cooks and ’ousemaids, it’s astonishin’ the country ha’n’t drawed long ago upon China for domestics.”

“Does your scheme of a settlement include servants?”

“No fear! All ’ll be level, and sarvice mutual help. Captain,” he exclaimed, fastening his eyes with a serious look upon me, “it’ll make us men feel heasy in our minds to learn that your sympathies ha’n’t been courted altogether into the ’tweendecks?”

“Mr. Brigstock,” said I with some sternness, “I was brought fraudulently into this ship, and forced, as you know, to accept this position of command. I say forced,” I added deliberately and slowly, “because though I heard no threats, how would you have used me had I declined? It can matter to no one in what direction my sympathies lean. Be you civil and obedient, sir, and let your crew act as though they fully understood I’m master, and not man, aboard this ship, and you shall have no cause to complain.”

I walked to the break of the poop, leaving him to chew upon what I had said.

The fresh trade-gale was blowing a strong and pleasant wind; the hard green horizon ran brilliantly clear, as though viewed

through a lens, and off the edge of it the trade-clouds were soaring and spreading, fleecy and silky and flying, like blown cobwebs. The seas were rolling in steady lines of a dark blue, splendid with the translucent veiling sparkles of spray. The ship drove through it with stately steadiness, bursting the sea into clouds of snow ahead of her, with rhythmic rolls to windward which swung the harmonies of fifty organs out of her rigging into the wind. She bore well the canvas she had, but she needed no more.

After I had stood some minutes in silence, waiting for the temper to cool in me, I called to Brigstock to get the log hove. Some men came aft—the reel rattled like castanets as Brigstock helped the log-line. “Stop!” roared Jupe Jackson, dropping the log-glass from the level of his eyes. “Eleven and a ’alf!” shouted Brigstock, after fumbling at the knots, and the line was then dragged dripping over the quarter.

Eleven and a half on a taut bowline and the royals, mizzen topgallant-sail, mainsail, and flying-jib off her! This was sailing to

fit the records of something out of Aberdeen rather than a Thames keel. How will I be treated if I save the ship? thought I, with such a momentary glow of spirits as I watched the motions of the beautiful vessel that, had I been her owner, I could not have felt more pride and delight in her beauty and swiftness.

Seeing Kate Darnley on the main-deck talking to a girl near the hatch, I beckoned and went halfway down the ladder to receive her.

“Can’t we talk down here?” said she.

“Yes. But the poop’s my own territory, so step up, I beg.”

She mounted the steps reluctantly, and exclaimed—

“I ought not to be where the rest are not allowed. The voyage will be very uncomfortable if anything’s done to excite the women’s envy or jealousy.”

I answered that my place was aft, that I might forfeit something of dignity if I talked and walked amongst the women upon the quarter-deck, and told her what Brigstock had said on the subject. This seemed to ease

her mind, and she crossed with me to the weather side of the poop, which we forthwith fell to patrolling, Brigstock at once stepping to the fore end, where he stood watching the ship, sometimes motionless at the head of the ladder, sometimes stalking with solemn mien athwart.

“You can see the ocean up here,” said I; “the bulwarks hide the sea from the main-deck.”

“I’d thankfully live aft,” she answered, with a spirited smile, and a dancing look of kindling pleasure in her eyes which were as bright as health and youth could make them, nay, the brighter just then, perhaps, for the colour which the strong wind had painted on her cheeks. “But I’m just a poor female emigrant, and what’s good for the others must be good for me.”

“Well,” said I, “I’m glad you hold those views. You don’t want me to tell you what I’d like. But Brigstock objects. His objection is the crew’s, and we want no trouble.”

“Don’t let’s talk about me. Will you be able to sail this ship to Sydney?”

“Why, yes.”

“Then I suppose they’ll give you command of her? That will please your father and dear Mrs. Morgan. How little they imagine down in quiet Blathford that we are together here! What a situation to find ourselves in! When you told us some stories of the sea that first night of our meeting at your father’s, I thought nothing could be more wonderful, and suspected that sometimes you invented. Now look at this! I have come to sea for some purpose indeed! I shall be able to talk too.”

“And be suspected of invention also. More goes on at sea than it’s in the philosophy of the land-lubber to compass. Tell me what you can recollect of this ship having been struck by lightning?”

“We had been sent below. The hatch was covered, so we saw no flash, but we heard it, and there was a general shriek. The sound was as though a gun had burst. Some of the women sank upon their knees and prayed. One of the girls went into hysterics, and screamed dreadfully. When we were let out,

we were told that the doctor had been struck dead, and the captain blinded."

"Then the mate jumped overboard in a fit of madness?"

"Afterwards."

"Next you spoke a ship, and the blinded captain, second mate, bo'sun, and some seamen boarded her?"

"Yes."

"A sudden violent change of weather separated the two vessels?"

"All that you say happened."

"Then, for sure," said I, "Brigstock and the men are not responsible in any way for the situation in which I found this ship. But what beats my time's this. How in jokes came those fellows in ten days to find wives, and work out a scheme for founding a republic in the South Pacific?"

"They must answer for themselves," she replied. "I keep to myself, and I therefore knew little of what was going on. In that time of our being without a commander, I'd sometimes see Brigstock standing in the midst of a number of women, addressing them after

the manner of outdoor preachers. I listened to him once. I did not understand what he said. He talked of the head of a state as a magistrate who, receiving his powers from the people, could marry, divorce, baptize, decide causes, try people for their lives, and so on. I noticed that in a few days he obtained a wonderful influence over certain of the women. They'd assemble with the sailors on the poop, and the rest of us down on that deck there would hear Brigstock's voice groaning, as he sermonized or expounded. We then heard, in a sort of gossiping way, that when the men procured a navigator, they intended to carry this ship to an island, and settle down with the women upon it."

"Miss Cobbs is one of those women?"

"Could you believe such a thing? But what will not some women do to get married? You have talked with Brigstock; is he sincere in this island scheme of his, do you think? Or are he and the crew masking something dreadful?"

She said this, and stopped me as we walked

to look me full in the face with a gaze of almost impassioned anxiety.

“Brigstock’s quite sincere,” I answered, after reflecting. “The man’s just a walking heap of vulgar vanity and egotism. He’s one of those fellows who fancy that, had they been better born and better educated, they’d be great men. He’s like a second mate I once sailed with, who, believing himself a poet, would exclaim, ‘Ah, if I had but the language!’ But Brigstock and the crew are in earnest. You may believe that.”

From time to time as we walked, Brigstock at the break of the poop would view us with a grave, thoughtful, askant stare. It was drawing on to four o’clock in the afternoon, the sunlight was a glorious moist yellow, and the wide roaring hollows astern of us were freckled with following sea-birds. Many women were on the main and quarter decks. In the heart of a crowd of them, abreast of the galley, I spied Alice Perry. She was declaiming as though inspired, extending her hands, and posture-making with the skill of an actress. A sailor “seizing” a rat-line in

the fore-shrouds, stopped often to peer through the spread of ropes, fixedly smiling at the listening crowd. Now and again, as Kate and I approached the forward end of the poop, some of the women looked as though they talked of us.

“It strikes me,” said I, “they’ll be thinking you and I have become pardners, and mean to settle with the others.”

“I’ll undeceive them.”

“Poor wretches! If you and I are to leave them with Brigstock, what’ll they do with the ship?”

“Let’s talk of things as they are and may be,” she exclaimed.

“May be!” I answered, smiling at her; “who’s to know but that Brigstock’ll convert me to his scheme, in which case you’d become my pardner, wouldn’t you, Kate?”

“It would be delightful to be imprisoned in an island with Brigstock and his crew, and twelve cooks and housemaids. I can’t believe the creatures are in earnest. And yet I can appreciate the reality of the thing too, when I run through the sailors’ choosings, or look

at the consenting women. I'll give you some of their names. There are Emma Grubb and Kate Davis, and two sisters, Jess and Nan Honeyball. That's Jess, there, standing by the mainmast, the girl with her hands upon her hips and her mouth open, looking towards Alice Perry. The seamen have picked out the coarsest, and perhaps the ugliest. Would not the heads of such women be easily turned, not only by the idea of getting a husband apiece, but by Brigstock's talk of a lovely island, blushing with flowers and fruits, where there are no mistresses, and where every Sunday is your own Sunday out?"

She stopped again this time to laugh loudly at some absurd thought. Brigstock looked at us, and meeting my eye, smiled gravely.

"Kate," said I, "you have told me nothing about yourself as yet."

"What's there to tell?"

"Here you are, an emigrant. What's your errand?"

"You know I left England that I might not starve. I may not starve on board this ship—though who's to tell what'll happen?"

said she, coiling a tress of hair, that had blown loose, behind her ear. "Perhaps I'm going to a harder lot in Australia than I've left." With a bitter shake of head, "No!" she added, "that would be impossible."

"You have no friends in the colony."

"None."

"Have you any money?"

"Ten pounds," she answered, artlessly.

"You have bought clothes and saved ten pounds. Who helped you?"

"Nobody."

"Why didn't you apply to my father? He'd have been glad to give his thin purse a squeeze for his old friend's daughter. And why didn't you take me into your confidence? I could, and would have helped you. I brought a lump of money ashore with me. You might have found that out by writing."

She looked seawards to hide her face. After a short silence, she said, "I know I have good friends in your father and mother, and a well-wisher in you."

"Oh ha! a well-wisher—yes!"

"I have no claims upon your parents. The

being a daughter of an old friend gives me no right to trouble them. Had I told them what I meant to do, they would have tried to stop me. But in stopping me, what would they have kept me to? I don't like to think of it. How should they—how should you—know what it is to be a governess—at least in England? I would rather—I would rather—governesses can't be worse treated in Australia than at home."

"You have been unfortunate in your experience."

"Have I? There are two girls in this ship who were governesses: they're going out with the intention of teaching in families. That's one of them: the slender, pale girl down there, with the light gold hair, standing alone. I've talked with them, and compared notes. Both are orphans, as I am. One, the daughter of a major, the other of a painter—an artist. Their experiences are longer and wider than mine, and they said, had they remained in England, they would have drowned themselves."

"Who the deuce are the people," said I,

“who make girls wish to drown themselves? Are they men? Oh, to have them with me but for one day in that fore-castle yonder! But aren’t they women always? If the yarns the novelists spin are true, the master of the family is usually disposed to treat the governess with rather too much kindness.”

“The master of the last family I was with cut the bread and butter for breakfast, and counted the pieces I ate; and when the housemaid fell ill, he asked me to bring up the coals and to help in the bedrooms out of school-hours.”

She crooked her eyebrows into an arch expression, but the dimness of tears not very deep down was in the light of her eyes, and, though she smiled, her underlip quivered.

I changed the subject by talking of Brigstock and his island scheme, protesting that I saw no harm, but, on the contrary, a very great deal of good in it. Why shouldn’t the overflowings of British poverty and wretchedness, such as our ’tweendecks held, find sunny, sweet-scented receptacles in the ocean acreage of the Pacific and other seas? I had

no mind myself, I told her, to abandon the civilization I was used to ; but suppose me a man soured by existence at home, overtaken by troubles I could not crowd on sail enough to run out of sight of, a wretch sunk in despondency by the death of his sweetheart, a widower robbed of his sole surviving darling child, should not I welcome such an asylum as Brigstock's island *might*—I did not say *would*—provide ?

Our talk was ended by a bell ringing the women down to supper. By this time the first dog-watch was well advanced. Brigstock had long ago gone forward, and was now lurking in the galley-door, pipe in mouth, yarning with the cook and a few seamen. They'd often glance aft, as though they talked of me. The sour sailor Harding had charge of the deck. I walked aft to mark how the ship headed, and, coming back, accosted the man.

“How many of a crew signed for this vessel ? ”

“Eighteen, sir.”

“There's now thirteen,” said I, “and not

six of a watch at that, unless Brigstock goes aloft ? ”

“ I’ve bin sailing in bigger vessels than this with fewer men,” said Harding.

Yes, thought I, and you can make things comfortable for yourselves now you’re on your own hook ; but if it were Halcrow’s time instead of yours, the twelve of you would be laying aft with cursing faces and growling throats, swearing the ship was undermanned, and refusing duty.

“ Ever had charge of a quarter-deck before this voyage ? ”

“ Never had to do with a quarter-deck in all my life, ’cept a-washing of it down.”

“ You’ll be missing the sea when you settle on your island, won’t you ? ”

“ Ay,” he answered, in his sulky voice, “ as the jackass misses his shafts.”

“ Brigstock’s to be president of your republic, isn’t he ? ” said I, talking with the notion of getting at the crew’s mind through his ; indeed, it would have been ridiculous to assert my state of captain by standing aloof in the common way, and holding my end of

the ship in lonely dignity—ridiculous, under such conditions.

“Ay, Tom’s to be boss,” he replied.

“He’s to marry you all?”

“Ay.”

“And divorce you, too?”

“Yes,” he answered, with a grin which crept into his face with the same sort of sulky reluctance his voice had.

“What’ll be accepted as law by your community, may be held as good and certainly convenient law by others. In that case, let Mr. Brigstock be chary and wary in granting divorces, otherwise you’ll be having your little settlement overloaded with ships full of quarrelsome people waiting for their turn.”

“What’s this talk of divorce!” he exclaimed, taking me very literally. “If parties ain’t satisfied to live together, ain’t the world big enough for ’em,” said he, looking halfway round the horizon.

“The having a wife is a bit of a drawback, when you want to marry again; so the lawyers hold. I’m not married myself, and talk for information.”

"It'll be no drawback along of us. Brigstock's constitootion'll provide for that hevil of civilization. When parties are dissatisfied, they can be sundered arter asking. No call for the man to go to the devil to get rid of the woman, or wicey varsey. Prove that your pardner's got a bad temper, that she neglects your 'ouse, that she hain't cleanly, and you're a free man. That'll be one of Brigstock's laws. And do the females relish it? Ask 'em! Ain't it terrible that Henglish Law should force a man or a woman to sin like blazes afore it'll liberate 'em? Many's gone wrong a-cussing of his or her hard fate whilst goin', and all to get rid of t'other. Our constitootion'll alter all that, and a tidy lot more."

"Who's your partner?"

"A party named Sarah Salmon."

"Why has nobody chosen Alice Perry? Isn't she the pick of the bunch?"

"She up with her fist when Johnny Snortledge offered. A prinked-up baggage! I'd rather lodge with a shark."

"Many of the women are hearty and strong," said I, looking at a number of them

who had come up after eating their supper. "They could pull and haul with the best of you, stand a trick after a few lessons, and perhaps go aloft, if they were breeched. There's a long road before us, and six of a watch! I've a mind to train some of the women."

He laughed.

"Women have shipped as sailors before now, and done as well as the smartest."

I walked away, having said this, with a singular idea in my head: why not teach the alertest and strongest of the women just enough of practical seamanship to enable me to carry the ship to Sydney without other help after Brigstock's lot had left us? I had been but a few hours in this vessel, yet during that time I had thought closely and passionately, and chiefly had I wondered how it would fare with us after Brigstock and his party were gone ashore? Brigstock had talked of Kanakas—I had no notion of trusting myself, helpless and alone as I was as a man, with a forecastle full of South Sea Islanders, let them hail from where they

would. Then, as to a company of European seamen : the Polynesian beach-comber was, in the bulk, a scoundrel who had run from the whaler or small trader—occasionally an escaped convict. In imagination I shipped a crew of the beauties, and then thought of my 'tweendecks full of women, and a fine ship and plenty of cargo to sail away with !

I walked the deck for some time alone, lost in the thoughts which had come crowding on top of that off-hand remark to Harding about training the women, and was full of the subject when Gouger called me down to supper. I found Brigstock in the cuddy, standing at the door. He had been talking to Miss Cobbs on the quarter-deck, but she went away on seeing me. When I was seated he took his place.

“ If you’ve got no objection,” said he, “ I’ll go on using the second mate’s cabin for sleeping in.”

“ Objection ! You’re mate ; you must sleep aft.”

“ Perhaps Joe had better come aft too.”

“ Why not, if he’s to be second mate ? ”

“Will yer keep to the watches as they’re now stood?” said he.

“The men are fairly divided?”

“Well, yes; I put the cook into the star-board watch. He was willing to take turn and turn about with the rest. But he’s no hand aloft. The loss of the bo’sun and the other two weakened us. But yer’ll find the hands willing—alive an’ hequal to all calls: hanxiety’ll keep ’em smart.”

“Let things rest, then. But, see now, there are some ninety women in the tween-decks; two-thirds are hearty and active, used to hard work. Why not strengthen our number by teaching the best of them a few tricks of seamanship, so that, if put to it, we should have deck-hands enough and to spare?”

He stared in his slow grave way, munching a piece of ship’s biscuit as leisurely as a cow chews the cud; then, when he had grasped my meaning, he said—

“I don’t see that the women’ll be wanted.”

I did not intend he should know what was in my mind.

“I like the notion,” said I, “and will get

some of the women aft, and talk to them. How long should an intelligent girl take to learn the names of ropes and run to the pins they're belayed to? Some of them, after a few lessons, will steer the ship in quiet weather as skilfully as the best of you."

A smile worked over his face.

"They'll only get in the road," he said.

I changed the subject by relating my experiences as mate of the *Hebe*. Down to that time I had found no opportunity to give him that startling story. He listened with lifted eyebrows and a long face, and fixed, unwinking gaze. When I had ended, he exclaimed—

"Ain't it time, doon't you think, sir, that civilization in Hengland was improved? A day may come—not likely, of course, that I, nor some generations arter me, are agoing to see it—when that constitootion of ours down in the Pacific'll have a little fleet of ships of its own a-trading to all parts, and one of my articles for the government of nautical trade'll be this—that any man caught insuring to the extent of twenty shulluns

above the valley of seven-eighths of what he sends afloat, forfeits all; the money to go to a benefit fund for the widows and orphings of drowned sailors."

This set me talking about his island. I asked if none of them had any notion of a spot proper for a settlement in those vast western seas?

"We could himage the sort of thing we'd like easy enough," he answered; "but is it to be found? One of our men, Bob Weatherwax, has got a vollum of travels in his chest. I was reading in it some days ago, and met with a description of John Fernandez. If them Chilians hadn't got hold of that island, it 'ud be the place we'd make for; plenty of fine hills and beautiful valleys, streams of sweet fresh water, a wonderful rich soil, so the piece says, plenty of goats, and werdure for the raising of all sorts of live stock, fishes abundant and up to the knocker as eating, whilst the climate's about the perfectest either side the equator."

"You want a big island?"

"As much room as is to be got."

I stepped into my cabin, overhauled the chart-bag, and brought out charts of the two Pacifics. Though we were a mighty long way to the norrard of the Horn, still I wished to pin the men's views down on some, on any, I cared not *what* part of the chart, so long as the place should rest a settled point to head for; for that would make all the difference between a definite voyage and a loose, tedious, perhaps aimless cruise. I laid the charts upon the table, and our noses came together over them. I showed him the line of the equator, and advised him to think of nothing within ten degrees north or south of it.

"My belief is," said I, "that whenever you come across anything particularly alluring you'll find it full of savages."

"That wasn't the experience of Mr. Fletcher Christian and his people," said he. "I've bin shipmate along with men who've spent three and four years at a stretch whaling in the Pacific, and they'd talk of passing island after island without sighting a living soul."

“Groups of coral stuff, of no more good than the Flat Holms.”

“No, sir, islands with mountains in the middle, and covered with trees, with large lagoons, like harbours, for bringing up in—so their yarns went.”

“Can’t you give a name to one of them?” said I, poring upon the chart. “Here are the Marquesas—full up. Here’s Tonga and Fiji and New Caledonia——”

“Try north,” he interrupted.

“North yields poor choice,” said I. “Look at the islands—few as currants in a sailor’s dumpling. There’s nothing for you in the Sandwich Islands—nothing in the Ladrões and Carolines.”

“Well, it’ll have to be a hunt,” he exclaimed, stiffening his spine and rubbing the small of his back. “But what we want’s *there*.”

I replaced the charts and went on deck.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EMIGRANTS' DINNER.

THERE was a wild hot flush in the west, and sea and sky looked to pour into it; the clouds in flying feathers of scarlet, and the sea ridging black as ink, though eastwards it was a hard dark green. To windward, far off on the weather bow, a sail was dimly glowing. I fetched the glass from the captain's cabin and found it, as it looked, a noble magnifier; it determined the orange dash of light far away into the proportions of a brig, heading as we went. I wondered if she were the *Hebe*, and worked away with the telescope for some time in a fit of excitement; but before daylight went I got sight of a stump foretopgallant-mast, and *that* settled the matter.

I looked over the rail for Kate, but did not see her. A few women walked about the decks. A couple of seamen, each with a female holding his arm, paced very gravely in the waist; the fore-castle was deserted, and the red wet gleam which slipped off the planks as the vessel dipped with an occasional flash of brine over the head-rail, explained why.

My head was full of the project of training a number of the women to steer and to handle the ropes. Would they come into my scheme? Very likely, if I explained my reasons. But then I did not intend that the crew should understand my motives; I had a feeling that if the men began to realize my resolution to carry the ship to port, they'd turn the matter over, reason that since *I* could see my way to a profitable job, *they* might as well stop and share in what was to come. I knew the seaman's character to be as unstable as the water he sails on. Before we were up with the Horn, ten of the twelve might be swearing that *they* wasn't going to settle no measly island; *they'd* stick

to the ship, they would ; claim their wages, and pocket what might follow. I determined to talk with Kate on the subject next day. It is a pity, I thought as I looked at the black yawn of main-hatch, a mere blotch in the evening gloom scarce touched by the feeble lights swinging under deck, that she should allow her notion of propriety to tyrannize to the degree of keeping her down there. Had she shown any willingness to live aft, I'd have brought her into the cabin, Brigstock or no Brigstock, and taken my chance of the issue of an argument with the crew. Yet she was right, though it vexed me to think of her in her gloomy quarters resting on the shelf, and eating the emigrants' fare, when there were empty cabins aft, and a table fit for a lady to sit at.

I kept the deck till eleven that night, watching the ship. I forget which of the two men had charge. The trade-wind blew hard, with a long high sea. When I went below to lie down I was prepared for a call to result in reefed canvas. But on going on deck again at half-past three, I found the

breeze had slackened; they had set the main-royal, and boarded the main-tack, and still the ship was sweeping along nobly, sheeting out the white water into a radiance as of moonlight.

Next morning was splendid blowing weather, the seas running in hills of blue, a flying sky of steam-white trade-cloud, and four ships in sight at eight o'clock, though all of them hull-down.

Some time after breakfast I left my berth to look for Kate. A girl was standing in the cabin-door singing. She held out her dress with both hands as she sang, keeping time in a frolicsome, see-saw, sideways jump; a troop of women stood viewing her, and they laughed immoderately at her antics. I caught but one verse of her song, which she howled out in the peculiar raw voice of the courts and lanes—

“She shall 'ave all that's fine and fair,
And the best of silk and satin shall wear;
And ride in a coach to take the hair
And 'ave a 'ouse in St. James' Square.”

Looking over her shoulder, with her face

flushed with caper-cutting, she spied me, let fall her gown, and bolted.

I saw Miss Cobbs standing beside the main-hatch, and asked if Miss Darnley was below. She answered yes, and called down. In a few minutes Kate arrived. She looked uncommonly well, fresh as though from a bath. Her cheeks wore a rich colour, her eyes shone with uncommon vivacity and brightness ; her dress was of some plain black stuff, not very new ; she wore her hat perched a little rakishly upon her fine black hair, and this took my eye mightily.

I shook her hand, and asked her to step on to the poop. She seemed shy, and peeped about her, and said, " Can't we converse here ? "

" No," I answered. " Come, come ! You're not a sort of girl to run delicacy into prudery ? You won't live aft, and you won't sit with me at the cabin-table, and you may be right, though I can't respect the sentiment that deprives me of your company. But the fastidiousness that stops you from walking with me on the poop must be humbug. So, come along, Kate."

She followed me.

"You don't care much, do you, for the opinions of such a cargo as this ship carries?" said I, passing my hand through her arm, to steady her on the lifting and falling slant of deck.

She turned the question by asking me to give her some news.

"There is none," said I.

"The sailors' scheme is so ridiculous and extraordinary," she exclaimed, "that I can't believe they'll persevere. They'll hit on some new project, and that's the news I'm waiting for."

"I don't know how it may be with the majority," I answered; "but Brigstock and that sour devil to leeward yonder are most infernally in earnest."

As I said this—we were approaching the wheel—I caught a look from the helmsman; he was Isaac Coffin of the moustache and humorous, vulgar eyes. I held my face with difficulty, for his mind lay as plain in his crumpled visage as though he spoke.

"The fellows'll find encouragement in you

and me, Kate," said I, wheeling round with her. "That man thinks we're 'pardners' discussing the island scheme."

"I overheard one of the women tell some others that we'd agreed to join the Brigstock set, and settle down," said she.

"What did you say?"

"I let her talk."

"Isn't it known we were acquainted before we met here?" said I.

"The 'tweendecks are like a little town," she answered; "one street never hears of what's happening in another. There are sets and cliques. The shop-girls move in a higher sphere than the cooks, and the cooks condescend to the general servants and women whose walks are a little vague, such as Emma Marks."

"Kate," said I, "I have a scheme, but the motive must be our secret. Suppose the sailors stick to their resolution; where shall I find men to work the ship to Sydney, when the crew have left us? But granted that I could find men, could I trust the rowdies we're likely to ship; beach-combers who carry

their consciences strapped in sheaths upon their hips? They'd cut my throat and be off with the ship, choose wives as the Jacks of this vessel have, though not so tenderly, haunt an island for a few months, and then vanish."

"Couldn't you get a few respectable English sailors from some passing ship to help us to Sydney?"

"If a ship passed with respectable English sailors on board, and the captain was willing—yes. But I've got to provide for conditions which are next door to certainties. I'm off an island; the crew are gone with their women; I'm the only man in the vessel; what's to be done?"

She was silent.

"I'll tell you; I'm for finding out if the pick of the women—in strength and coarse health, I mean—will allow themselves to be trained to pull and let go and steer."

She opened her eyes at me.

"I'm in earnest. There are women in the 'tweendecks as strong as strong men. They couldn't, I admit, go aloft in petticoats; but

I hope to see my way even out of *that* difficulty by-and-by."

Still she opened her eyes at me.

"What do you think of my idea?"

"It is odd—it is—it is—why, if it *can* be done, it will be a good idea. Certainly many of the women are strong, as you say, stronger than many men."

Some conceit tickled her, and she laughed loudly.

"Will you set an example?"

"I'll do anything my strength is equal to; but I can't climb those heights," she exclaimed smiling, and up-turning her dark eyes at the swollen and mowing fabric of spar and canvas.

"I'll teach you to steer a ship in half a dozen lessons, and in a few days you'll know exactly what ropes to let go when the order's given. What do they call that tackle?" said I, pointing to the main-brace.

She did not know.

"And that—and that—and that?"

She could not name a rope. But she knew the names of most of the sails, and the differ-

ence between the mainmast and the bowsprit.

"Still," said I, "you'll let me use you as an example for the others. You'll let me hang the bell upon you?"

"But how much easier to pick up a crew as we go along!"

"I'll not do it," I replied, with some warmth. "Give me a couple or three mates to back me, a bo'sun, and a carpenter I can put trust in, *then* you shall advise me. Can't you understand the perils I'd avoid by training a batch of women to do men's work?"

"Have you spoken to Miss Cobbs?"

"No; but your question gives me an idea."

I saw the matron, as they called her, standing in the gangway talking with Brigstock, whom a little while earlier I had heard shouting to some men; indeed, he could not have looked after the necessary work of the ship more closely had he been a signed chief mate, with the whole round voyage before him. I stood with Kate watching them; presently

they observed me, and Miss Cobbs, perceiving by my manner that I wished to speak to her, came aft. I called her on to the poop, and after saluting her very civilly, said I'd be glad to have a few words with her. She bobbed me one of her queer curtsies, and answered that her time for the next hour was quite at my service.

I determined to approach the point gradually, and began by talking about Kate ; I told her who she was, and expressed regret that she could not see her way to live aft.

"Miss Darnley's right," exclaimed Miss Cobbs, looking at Kate. "It would not do, I assure you. Mr. Brigstock was for bringing me into the cabin. I said certainly *not*. If *I* did not set an example of strict propriety to the females, what might not happen? Mr. Brigstock's wonderful scheme mustn't fail for the want of discipline and decorum here."

"Mr. Brigstock," said I, "is a very remarkable man."

"Indeed he is, then, sir," she answered, with one of her wire-drawn smirks ; "he's

one of them men who are born far below their rightful sphere. But lor! it's but too true that the soul's often packed in the wrong case? I know a Chinaman with the sperrit of a Christian; he hates his face, and believes in Christ. What right has his body to his soul? Mr. Brigstock is born with the sperrit of a ruler; it's with him as though somebody had taken the works out of a gold watch-case and put 'em into a silver one."

"Have you any relatives, Miss Cobbs?"

"Two married sisters at 'ome, sir."

"Does it please you to think of separating yourself from the world by settling in a little island in the Pacific?"

"It do, indeed. And you can't call it separating. We shall be a people. I dare say if there was anything very particular to look forward to at home, I should think twice. But I don't love the idea of ploughing the seas in this way for a living, and really, after I step ashore at Blackwall, I am no better off than any of those young ladies there," said she, with a sweep

of her hand in the direction of the main-deck.

“What will you do for clothes?” said Kate.

“How do they manage at Pitcairn?” she answered. “We provide ourselves, as is understood, with a little assortment from the cargo of this ship. And supposing it should come to our depending on our own skill and taste? It’s so at ’ome, isn’t it? You want a hat. Well, you buy the plain straw, let’s say, then feathers and ribbon for trimming. Now, there’s to be no shops at present in our settlement; but it’ll be strange if there’s not plenty of material out of which we can make all sorts of head-dresses for ourselves, with plenty of beautiful wild flowers, and the gorgeous wings of birds for trimming.”

She dropped a curtsy of self-approval, with a countenance of exquisite complacency, as she thus spoke.

I saw Kate striving hard to smother a laugh. Indeed, Miss Cobbs’s talk couldn’t fail to submit certain queer images of herself to us. I figured her raven-hued sausage

curls and thin nose under a grass hat of her own weaving, piled high with Pacific vegetation and plumage. And then another absurd fancy occurred to me, and I looked away till I had shaken off a sudden fit of silent laughter.

I now asked her to pace the deck, and we started—Kate on one side, she on the other. Brigstock, who was directing some work forward, frequently turned with grave, slow gestures to survey us. The girl Alice Perry had climbed on top of the bulwark-rail, with her back against the main-shrouds, where she sat safe. There she hung, swinging her legs and flashing looks at us under her wild, shaggy brow, as we'd approach the forward end of the poop. A number of girls were singing in concert near the main-hatch, and I thought I heard the sound of a fiddle in the 'tweendecks. On either side the galley were lines of bedding, spread for airing. A farmyard noise came from the coop and long-boat; and what with the moving figures of the girls, the dance and flutter of their coloured raiment, the blown smoke from the

galley chimney, the picture of that ship's deck was as lively a sea-piece as I had ever seen—full of the hurry of the strong wind, of darting colours, of swinging shadows, with a ceaseless roar of rushing foam on either hand, and a blue horizon, sharp as the edge of a lens, broken in three places by a sail, and dark as violet against the morning azure.

As we walked, I told Miss Cobbs carelessly of my scheme of making the women useful, and amusing them too.

“Aren't there men enough to do the ship's work?” said she; and I was struck by a quick, suspicious lift of her eyes.

“That's my business,” I answered, coolly. I added, after a pause, “Twelve men are not a complement for a vessel of the *Earl of Leicester's* tonnage, freighted as she is.”

“No doubt you're right, sir. But, few as the men are, they're good 'ands.”

“I've called you up here to talk the thing over. Go, presently, amongst the women and sound them, and let me hear what they think.”

"But they did not embark in this ship to do her work," said Miss Cobbs, with some amazement.

"You don't suppose I'd *force* ship's work upon them. There's a long voyage before us. We're undermanned. I choose to think so, and know it! We need a supplemental crew. The girls have nothing to do with themselves all day long. Are they willing to take lessons in steering, and learn the names of the ropes, sails, and yards of the ship?"

She looked as if she would like to tell me my scheme was ridiculous, and exclaimed—

"It's a very hentertaining idea, sir. Some of the women, I'm sure, would gladly learn how to steer, and it 'ud amuse a number of them to get the names of the ropes by 'eart. But I'm afraid you'd find 'em of no real use, if it should come to your needing their services. What do you say, Miss Darnley?"

"There are ninety women. I dare say Mr. Morgan would be able to educate a company of about twenty into being able to help on deck. But he'll find none with

pluck enough to climb," said Kate, again looking aloft.

Miss Cobbs giggled. "Who's to teach the lasses, sir?" she asked.

"I'll arrange for that, and take classes myself."

"Will you learn?" said the matron, smirking at Kate.

"It will be a proud moment for me when I can hold that wheel, and control this beautiful ship by it," answered Kate, with such fine affectation of enthusiasm that her colour seemed to mount, and her eyes to kindle with the mere effort of acting.

After we had talked a little longer on this matter, Miss Cobbs left me, taking my request that she should sound the women as a command from the master of the ship. Kate walked by my side for another half-hour. All our talk was about her future. Where would she stay on her arrival at Sydney? What would she do if she did not quickly get a situation as governess? I'd look sideways and earnestly at her whilst we conversed. At Blathford I had thought her pretty. I

seemed now to find her as sweet and handsome again as she was then. Was I going to lose my heart and complicate my adventures by a love passage? She'd sometimes grow grave whilst talking about what she was to do in Australia, should the *Earl of Leicester* ever reach Sydney; but there was no lack of fire and spirit in her words and manner. The heart that had brought her into this ship beat strong. There was courage of a steady, quiet, heroic sort in every look and saying and smile of hers.

When we parted, I went below, and spent an hour in going carefully through Captain Halcrow's effects, and stowing them away for locking or sealing up. It was a duty I owed a brother seaman, and I resolved that whatever I borrowed or took I'd make a note of, that he might suffer no loss should it be in my power to pay him.

Whilst I was at this work, I thought of the *Hebe*, and wondered if I should ever recover my own poor outfit, and little stock of money. I found twenty sovereigns in a small box in a locker. I also met with a dozen

boxes of very good cigars. When I was tired with this work, I wrote in the log-book, and then made certain calculations : next overhung the South Pacific chart, and searched the collection of books for information about the navigation of those seas, but in vain. This brought the hour to about half-past eleven, and I went on deck with one of Halcrow's sextants.

Brigstock was on the poop, to windward forward, talking with Harding. I looked about me for a minute or two, and then sung out, "Mr. Harding, set the fore-topmast stu'nsail."

The man promptly ordered the boom to be rigged out.

"We must sweat it out of this wind whilst we have it," said I, going up to Brigstock. "Better two points off than two of leeway. Make a fair wind of whatever comes along," said I.

I watched the men set the sail, and observed they were lively and thorough.

"She feels it, sir," said Brigstock, coming up from the lee rail with a face of grave satisfaction.

“ At what hour do the women dine ? ”

“ At wan bell.”

“ I mean to see them eat. You'll accompany me ? ”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

I took up a position to command the sun, Brigstock attending me. He waited till I made eight bells, regarding me with curiosity and respect, and then when the chimes on the main-deck had ceased, he exclaimed, “ So you're in airnest, sir, in your scheme of training the women ? Them as'll be willing, I mean.”

“ Yes,” I answered impatiently.

“ You'll excuse me,” said he, with his slow delivery, “ a-questioning of you as captain of this ship, but what good might you think the females are going to be to us ? ”

“ Has Miss Cobbs been talking to you ? ”

“ She has, sir.”

“ She can give you my reason.”

“ There are twelve good men in this ship, capt'n, sailors all who don't want any help from women, sir.”

“ I intend to supplement the ship's company

by a working body of strong girls, those who, as you say, may be willing. Now, Mr. Brigstock, I'm either to be captain or not. Say the word," said I, looking at him steadily.

"Oh," he exclaimed, with an odd bow of civil protest, "this is no scheme to alter our views of you, sir."

"I shall be ready to visit the 'tweendecks at half-past twelve," said I.

At that hour he was waiting for me on the quarter-deck. All the women were below, the last of the girls of the mess had disappeared down the hatchway, with the steaming kids and cans; the seamen were likewise at dinner, and the ship rushed bowing onwards under her wide overhanging wing of studding-sail, watched by Harding, who paced a few planks' width of the weather-poop deck.

I descended the hatch-ladder, followed by Brigstock, and stood a minute or two viewing a singular scene. The women were seated in a row on either side the table, at the after extremity of which sat Miss Cobbs. The atmosphere was clouded with the steam of pease-soup, boiled pork, and plum-duff. The

heel of the windsail poured in a good supply of fresh air ; but there would have been no virtue in a living gale to sober or extinguish the smell of the soup and the pork. The kids and dishes steamed down the whole length of the table, and in addition to their incense, I tasted the disgusting flavour of soup and bouilli, and preserved "spuds." Lanterns swung in the fore-part, and the play of lights and shadows there, the gradual dimming down of the lines of faces into mere phantasms, the various change of posture in the eating and drinking figures, produced an effect many touches above my genius to describe.

Every tongue was going, knives and forks rattled on the tin plates, like a chain-cable in a hawse-pipe. A few of the women moved up and down small divisions of the sitters, as though waiting upon them. I kept for a bit under the hatch, the better to hear Brigstock's replies to my questions, and I now learnt that he had taken the second mate's place in serving out the stores since the ship had been left without any one to command her. He gave me certain facts, which I'll not trouble you

with, though I was here to satisfy myself upon them.

Some time passed before any notice was taken of us. When we were perceived, Miss Cobbs stood up, and the jangle of tongues at our end softened, though a sharp talk, with frequent shrill laughter and piercing cries to hand this along, and to pass that across, was kept up at the forward part. I told Miss Cobbs to keep her seat, and complimented her upon what I chose to call her methods. Everything looked clean; the dishes were so disposed as to illustrate a well-digested system. In short, that long dinner-table was as comfortable to the sight as the judgment could possibly contrive in dealing with such coarse utensils, and unsavoury sea-fare as loaded it.

I walked leisurely down the starboard row of diners, Brigstock in my wake. I had several motives in paying this visit, but chiefly I wished the women and the sailors to understand that I considered myself as fully the master of the vessel as ever Halcrow had been; with every right of inquisition, and

strong with resolution that the government of the ship should be justly and carefully administered. The females fell somewhat silent as I passed. I looked for Kate, and saw her sitting on the port side.

When I got to the bottom of the table, I came to a stand, and glancing along the double row of faces, I exclaimed, "Ladies, I'm glad to see you're well looked after. This punctuality of meals, and the manner in which the food's served, do great credit to Miss Cobbs, and to Mr. Brigstock."

I had expected some applause would follow this; instead, several women began to hiss, and a rasping voice yelped out, "Don't mention Brigstock. Why aren't we to be sailed straight to Australia?"

"Have you come down here to talk about making sailors of us, captain?" called out Alice Perry, who was seated midway on the starboard side.

"Oi'll be a tarpaulin soon as ever yer loike," cried a girl. "Oi'm a Dealman's daughter; oi've been off along with farder scores of times. His lugger was the *Water Witch*, and

she was run down, and all hands drowned off Folkestone, three year ago come next month, and that's why oi'm here."

"I'll be talking to as many of you as'll volunteer by-and-by," said I. "Go on with your dinner, I beg. I'm not here to interrupt you."

"Taste this," exclaimed a young woman close beside me, holding up a lump of pale fat pork on a two-pronged fork.

"Ask the capt'n to try the pease-soup fust," cried another woman.

"Don't let him be persuaded to have anything to do with the pudden," said a third, in a mincing tone, and with a provincial accent [this woman's face was like a piece of summer English country, with her cherry lips, and apple cheeks, and blackberry eyes, and rich gloss of chestnut on her hair,] "or the ship'll again be without a navigator."

"Is it the pork or the cooking that's wrong?" said I to the first speaker.

"The pork," she answered. "It was never part of the husual pig. H've boiled plenty

of pork in my time, but never such flesh as this."

"It's a piece of old sailor, Miss Flanders," exclaimed the woman next her. At this there was a great laugh; Brigstock joining in with a solemn, hollow, "ha! ha!"

"I can deal with the cook, but not with the meat," said I. "No good meat ever dreams of going to sea. What's shipped is meant to keep sailors' teeth white and sharp, and to give them a relish for beef-steak when they get ashore."

On my way to the hatch-ladder, I stopped to speak to Kate. Whilst I stooped, intending a low voice, Alice Perry, who sat nearly opposite, cried out, "Capt'n, sit down beside Miss Darnley, and take your dinner along with us. There looks to be plenty, but you'll find it isn't all jam for us girls."

I smiled at the coarsely handsome creature, with her strong white teeth, and large, black, saucy eyes, and having addressed Kate, passed on, taking no notice of the cries some of the females followed me with, to stop and comfort them with talking about the voyage, and how

long it was to last—to stop and explain what sort of work would be expected of them if they were willing to learn the names of ropes and how to steer.

CHAPTER VII.

A FORECASTLE DANCE.

THE trade-wind, without failing us, scanted considerably that afternoon. The sea ran sloppily, as though thick with grease; the weather darkened with wet, and for the next two days the time was too uncomfortable to find me a chance of talking to the women. It then cleared one morning watch in a sweep of the heavens by a sudden freshening of the trade-gale, that brightened the sky out into a clear face of stars; at seven o'clock the ship, heeled to the line of her channels, was flashing her wet copper to the windward sun through an ocean of dark blue foaming billows, the trade-cloud sailing over the reeling trucks, the flying-fish sparkling from the shearing fore-foot, and a confused

music, as of a dozen orchestras blowing and fiddling in opposition, trembling out of the shadowy concavities of canvas, and twanging off the taut and vibratory standing rigging into the steady roar of the breeze.

I breakfasted and went on deck. It was about nine o'clock. I saw Miss Cobbs conversing with Brigstock at the foot of the poop-ladder, and asked her to request the emigrants to assemble on the quarter-deck, as I desired to explain my scheme of picking a supplemental crew from among them. There might then have been from twenty to thirty females on deck.

I took a few turns whilst Miss Cobbs went about amongst the women; presently a great number, indeed all, I think, had assembled. The sailors of the watch gave notice to their mates below of what was going forward, and all hands came into the waist, the watch knocking off their work, to listen. I did not think proper to notice the impudence of the men in coolly dropping their jobs. I might talk big, but I understood—and so did they—that discipline with us must be

regulated by the forecastle view of our situation.

Nor was I made very easy by the suggestions of the men's postures. A sailor can express mutiny by an attitude, and with tight and silent lips dart curses at you with his looks. But my resolution was formed and as hard as nails on this subject of a female crew. I went to the poop-rail and looked a minute at the women who stared up at me with countenances awork with curiosity. Kate was in the thick of them, Alice Perry in the foreground, almost directly under me. Near her stood the black hung-faced Jewess, Emma Marks; her purple pupils on yellow ground made her seem to stare up at me with a small pair of sunflowers for eyes.

In a few words I told the women I considered the ship short-handed, and asked some of their number to form into a little company, to be instructed in the art of steering, and in the names and uses of the rigging, yards, and sails.

Brigstock, standing abreast of me to leeward, listened attentively. Whilst I spoke,

Joe Harding turned to some of the men he stood beside on the skirts of the women, and talked with them.

“Of course, ladies,” I continued, “the scheme is more for your entertainment than for utility. Yet, seeing what a big company we are, and that our crew of men numbers twelve only, I say it will be for the good of the whole shipload of us that we should be able to count upon the services of a trained number of you at any moment.”

“What’ll be expected of them that volunteers?” said Emma Marks.

“They’ll take the wheel from time to time in fine weather, and help on deck when the watch are aloft reefing or furling.”

“Will they be paid for their work?” said Emma.

“The owners or agents are sure to recognize their services.”

“No female could climb those heights!” cried Miss Cobbs, who stood on the quarter-deck, just under the poop where Brigstock was.

“Try *me*!” shrieked Alice Perry, with a

quick clasp of her hands and a loud laugh as she looked at Miss Cobbs.

I now made a sort of speech, in which I related one or two anecdotes of women who had shipped on board vessels as sailors. I said that no doubt the crew could tell of young seamen who had proved women.

“That’s right enough, sir,” cried out the cook, a man named Wambold. “I was in hospital at Calcutta three years ago, along with a young ordinary seaman who’d been took with cholera; he died, and they found him a gal.”

I continued my address. I said that those ladies who were willing to learn to be sailors would assemble at fixed times on the poop, where they’d receive instructions from me. I had no doubt, I said, that Mr. Brigstock, and Mr. Harding, together with others of the crew, would be glad to lend me a hand. There was a long voyage before us; amusements were hard to invent. The work to be done would improve the graces of the figure; what was more elegant than the light, dancing, easy step of the sailor? This charming gait

and flowing carriage of figure the sailor-girls of the *Earl of Leicester* would speedily though insensibly acquire. The effect of such deep-sea graces upon the Australians, who were to a man lovers of the ocean, must prove exceedingly fortunate for many of the ladies.

I talked on in this strain; then asked those who were willing to volunteer as a supplemental crew to hold up their hands.

Now there was no sickness in the ship at that time, and I believe that every living person on board was on deck; you will suppose, then, that the women and seamen made a great crowd; when I asked them to lift their hands, I had reckoned upon about a dozen girls doing so. Judge how astonished I was when at least seventy arms were flung up; and there the women stood, pretty nearly the whole of them, as it seemed at the first glance, with their hands in the air, one straining on tiptoe behind another, most of them with eager smiling faces. I took this as expressive of their resentment, and as a protest against Brigstock and his lot. Indeed, I felt tolerably sure that had they supposed Brig-

stock and the crew favoured my scheme, the show of hands would have been exceedingly poor.

I called out "All right!" signing that they might put their arms down. I then said, in my politest tones—

"Ladies, I thank you for your ready acceptance of my wishes. We shall not need all the volunteers by one half at least. I therefore propose, with your consent, to choose from amongst you whilst you stand there. Those I select will be so good as to step on to the poop. Those who are not chosen will please understand they are held in reserve to be drawn upon as we may need recruits."

The first I pointed to was Alice Perry, who instantly bounded up the poop-ladder, with shining eyes, and a frolicsome shake of the head, and a saucy laughing look at Brigstock, who eyed her in solemn silence as she danced up the steps. I then pointed to a second girl, named Emmy Read, a stout, strong young woman of about seven and twenty. One after another the women I beckoned to

came on to the poop. I picked out thirty of the strongest and the likeliest. Some, with their broad backs and stout arms, would have proved a match for any of our men, whether thrusting at a handspike or dragging upon a rope—nay, or at wrestling or at boxing, for that matter, suppose you trained them to keep their temper. Kate made thirty-one.

They seemed highly diverted. Those on the main-deck stared at us with moody, jealous looks. None of the seamen's "pardners" volunteered. On the contrary, they had backed away whilst I was picking and choosing, and were making a crowd with the sailors in the gangway. I found an eye for them, and noticed they talked earnestly. The massive Emma Grubb, burly as a big smack-boy, jabbered hands on hip with the seaman of her choice, Isaac Coffin, who barely reached to her nose. The two sisters, Jess and Nan Honeyball, were loud and demonstrative; Wambold was Nan's pardner, and a man named Luddy, Jess's. There, too, was the moon-faced Kate Davis of the huge red arms; Jupe Jackson was her pal, and

she talked in that crowd with both hands upon his shoulders, as though "standing by" to shake the life out of him at a moment's notice.

And here let me say that the other ladies who were to serve as mothers for a settlement of Britons in the Pacific were—I got their names one by one by degrees afterwards—Martha Gibbs, dairymaid, the pardner of Sampson, then at the wheel; Selah Bung, sempstress (Gouger); Maggie Dobree, sempstress (Bob Weatherwax); Nan Nesbitt, nursemaid (Jonathan Snortledge); Isabella Dobson, cook (Hull); Sall Simmonds, housemaid (Prentice). The others you know.

Brigstock paced athwart the back of the poop. He viewed me often askew. The girls I had picked out were in a crowd abreast of the weather-mizzen rigging.

"A finer body of women," said I, running my eye over them, letting my gaze barely rest on Kate with an instant's smile, "no man could desire to make sailors of. Ladies, you're doing me honour, not only obliging me, but greatly helping yourselves also,

believe me," said I, earnestly. "I'll give you a lesson this afternoon. There's too strong a breeze, too high a sea for any helm-work now. I shall want a bo'sun and two mates."

At the words, *two mates*, three or four girls burst into a laugh.

"I'll be bo'sun!" cried Alice Perry, swaying with the bowling roll of the stage Jack, as she stood, as though about to break into a jig.

"That post will be filled by the smartest," said I; and then asked them to accompany me to the wheel.

They all followed, laughing and ejaculating and highly pleased. Kate was as eager as any of them in her behaviour, and I admired her tact. The able seaman, Sampson, was at the helm; he was a tough-looking chap with a leather face, and eyes sunk in their sockets as though blown deep by years of hard weather. He wore a wild expression as of a grin struggling with a scowl when the women closed around him, and chewed hard upon the knob inside his check, snap-

ping glances at the compass-bowl, then aloft, and swinging off from the wheel, whose machinery of tackle and kicking tiller gave him plenty to think of, so abrupt was the sternward plunge at times, into the thunderous rush of yeast under the counter.

The women listened with close attention whilst I explained the mechanism of the wheel, often exclaiming, "Lor now! I s'y, though. Ain't it crooly funny!" and so forth.

The strapping girl who called herself the daughter of a Deal boatman, thrust close beside me to hearken, and when I was done, she asked leave to try her hand at the wheel. I looked her over, and seeing confidence strong in her face, nodded, and told Sampson to get to leeward, ready to help but not to touch the spokes.

This Deal girl's name was Susannah Corbin. She grasped the wheel as though to the manner born. The kicks of the tiller made her breasts heave, but with large nostrils and set lips she held the ship to her course, and though she stood at the

helm for five or six minutes, not once had Sampson occasion to help her.

“What think you of this?” said I to the women.

“You’ll give me a chance, I ’ope, before you make *her* bo’sun?” exclaimed Alice Perry.

“Let me try my hand,” said Kate.

She took the wheel from the Deal girl, and made so handsome a figure at it that you must have fallen in love with her, even as a picture; but then, nothing could better show off a fine shape than a ship’s wheel, which stretches the arms and compels the form into all sorts of yielding, swaying motions.

The ship was speedily three points off her course with Kate at the helm, and Sampson came to windward again. We were closely observed by the seamen and a number of women in the fore parts of the ship, whence the sight commanded the length of the poop. I told my company of girls that I would give them a lesson in seamanship that afternoon, and away they went to the main-deck laughing, joking, and talking, all in high spirits, some acting as though turning

a wheel or pulling a rope, others leaping and singing. They filed down the poop-ladder in a tumult of laughter and voices.

I detained Kate on the poop for a walk and a chat.

"I think you are puzzling Brigstock," said she.

"No matter. I'll make good sailors of those women long before we're up with the Horn."

"Would not it be good policy to be candid with Brigstock and the crew?"

"Why, yes, if I was as cocksure that all hands were as much in earnest in this island scheme as Brigstock is. But I don't want them to change their minds. My intention is to preserve this ship with the help of the women. I mean to be the hero of one of the most memorable adventures in sea-story."

"The men won't carry out their scheme."

"I'll find them an island, anyway."

"The girls are absurdly delighted with the idea of becoming sailors," said she, laughing. "But without men, how will you reef and furl?"

“Breek Alice Perry, and she’d be sending down a royal-yard in a week,” said I.

This was Hebrew to her.

“I’ll steer your ship, and pull your ropes,” she exclaimed; “but you’ll never drive me up there,” and she halted, looking straight up at the swollen and towering canvas.

I changed the subject by talking once more of her prospects in Australia, and we had a long chat about home. She told me one or two touching stories of her struggles.

“Well, you’re out of it all here,” said I. “There’s nothing white-lipped and black-hearted in the shape of mistresses aboard *us*; no small pudding-heads *here* to fill with geography and arithmetic. When those hearts there are out of the ship, you shall be her chief mate.”

After I had taken sights that day, I asked Brigstock if there was a bo’sun’s whistle in the forecastle. He said there might be one in the chest left behind by the boatswain of the vessel. I requested him to look. He answered, “The sacredness of propputty’s a

thing I'm for impressing strongly upon the minds of those who go along with me. How'd it stand with my arguments if the crew was to see me overhaul the bo'sun's chest?"

I glanced at the clothes he had borrowed from one of the cabins, and said gravely, "Mr. Brigstock, I admire your principles, and should be sorry to ask you to do anything likely to weaken the valuable influence you exercise over the crew. Still, if you could contrive, without prejudice to your moral control, to find me a bo'sun's whistle, you'll much oblige me."

When he came into the cabin at the dinner-hour, he brought a whistle with him. I thanked him, but asked no questions. It had, no doubt, belonged to the late bo'sun, and it was an old silver pipe, which blew a shrill sweet whistle when I put it to my lips.

Whilst I dined, most of the women came on deck and hung about as though waiting for me, some peeping in at the cabin-door and windows. Brigstock talked a good deal

about his constitootion, and said one of the main principles of it would be religious equality.

“It’s terrible to consider,” said he; “that a man may be wrong though he thinks he’s right; so that by a-forcing of his own opinions he stands at Judgment Day to be charged with the loss of souls. One sperrit’s enough for a man to look arter, and that’s his own. The hessence of the religion of my constitootion’ll be, let every man see to his own soul; he’ll have no time then to trouble himself about others, and so we may scrape along without much preachin’”

He continued for some time in this strain. I listened with attention. A rude enthusiasm glowed in his words, and lighted up his dark, steady eyes, and slightly reddened his long, formal, melancholy face. If ever I had questioned the fellow’s sincerity and zeal as a Settler and Primitive Father, all doubt must have ended whilst I now followed him. Just before he left the table to relieve Joe Harding, he said, “May I ask, capt’n, if you’re in airnest in your scheme about them

women? Or is it your notion jest to amuse 'em?"

"They'll prove serviceable," I answered shortly; then, observing that he stood and looked at me, I said, "I shall expect you and Mr. Harding to help me train the girls."

With the instinctive obedience of the old hand, he muttered, "Ay, ay, sir," and slowly made his way on deck.

There was in me at this time a spirit of indifference that was a sort of insolence, due perhaps to my feeling strong as the only navigator in the ship. I was young, and wanting in wariness. Again, for some years I had held situations of subordinate command; I failed to steadily keep in mind the conditions under which this *Earl of Leicester* was sailed; the quarter-deck habit was dominant, and I never could talk to Brigstock and the others but as forecastle hands, designed by nature to hop and fly when a skipper or a mate sung out.

But let this be as it will; when Brigstock was out of the cabin, I went to the cuddy-door, and asked the women who were hanging about in clusters under the break of the

poop to send Miss Darnley aft, if she was disengaged. Some of the girls ran with wonderful willingness and alacrity, crying for Miss Darnley along the deck and down the hatch. Party feeling was expressed even in this little thing; it was already Brigstock and his small Utopian clan on the one hand, and myself and the great mass of the emigrant women on the other.

Kate came through the crowd to the door where I stood; she looked startled—she was pale and nervous.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Step in,” said I.

She entered, and I drew her to the after-end of the cuddy.

“What’s frightened you?”

“A dozen women have been screeching out my name.”

“What of that?”

“You can’t imagine the effect of hearing your name ringing through a ship in a dozen sorts of screams. What do you want? Look how they are staring!”

I pulled out the boatswain’s whistle, and

putting it to my lips, piped a call. I had learnt to pipe when I first went to sea, and warbled like a canary now, though years had passed since I had put a sea-whistle to my mouth. The women, hearing that shrill music, gathered in a thickening crowd at the cuddy front, but none offered to enter.

“Did you hear that?” said I.

“I did!” she answered, bringing her hands from her ears.

“I want you to learn certain calls, that you may pipe the women to school, and afterwards to their work. Blow now.”

I gave her the whistle and she blew; I took it from her and piped and trilled and bade her imitate the noise. She did so in a manner that satisfied me she would soon be mistress of that whistle. We blew together in this fashion for about half an hour. The women outside at first looked amused and excited; but as the time wore on, they grew impatient. One of them, a red-faced, thin-featured person, named Catherine Hale, standing in the doorway, bawled out at last—

"I thought we was to have a lesson. Is Miss Darnley to be the only one taught?"

I asked for the time. One behind her looked up at the clock, and said it was after half-past two.

"Then," said I, "up with you, ladies, on to the poop," and Kate and I went on deck by the companion-steps.

When the girls were assembled, I told them I meant to teach Miss Darnley certain tunes on the boatswain's pipe, with which airs she would, when perfect, summon them on to the poop, twice a day weather permitting. I drew them up in double ranks just before the wheel, and pointed to such gear as I intended they should get the names of, often stepping to the ropes where they were belayed to pins, so that by seeing how they led they could better understand their uses, and then I made them repeat the names and my explanations. They took it all as good fun, and yet were fairly in earnest too. I guessed their education in this way would occupy some time, for many were dull, thick, and slow: these were unfortunately the coarsest and strongest, the

best of all to answer my purpose. But then I did not want much knowledge in them; the ability to run to such ropes, to brace about such yards, to let go and hoist away upon such halliards as I named would suffice, and there was plenty of time before us.

We were watched with curiosity by the seamen and their "pardners," and many of the ladies crowded up the poop-ladders and got upon the bulwark-rails to observe our proceedings. I kept the girls on deck till four o'clock, teaching and talking to them. Some were quick in picking up the terms and correctly applying them, and amongst these were Alice Perry, a girl named Clark, who wore spectacles, and the Deal girl, Corbin.

When the lesson was ended, I lifted my hat and thanked them for their attention, and added significantly and very earnestly, "All this is intended for your safety." They then left the poop in a troop, and presently the main-deck was noisy with their own and the laughter of others as they went over their lessons again, one crying, "Emmy, which is the maintopgallant-brace?" and another,

“Miss Marsdale, what’s the mizzen-topsail halliards?” and a third, “Susie, where’s the end of the starboard main-brace?”

Now and again one of the Jacks barked out a laugh at these calls.

Eight bells had gone; the first dog-watch had begun. It was a glorious afternoon. The light of the sun was yellow as pale gold, untinged as yet by the hectic of the west. The trade-wind was a steady pouring breeze, and the ship, to the faithful spiriting of it, swept onwards at a steamer’s constant rate. The two last heaves of the log had shown nine—neither more nor less. Whilst I paced the deck after the lesson, I thought to myself, the Horn’s not distant at this going; I’ve not begun too soon!

At supper, Brigstock asked me, respectfully, how I had got on? I answered that I was very well satisfied.

“The men fancy,” said he, “that some of the females asked yer to teach ’em, meanin’ to turn sailors if they aren’t able to get work out in Australia.”

“Strange that a simple idea should be so

hard to understand," said I, guessing that his sentence was a "feeler." "It may come to our wanting hands, and what you can't find you must make."

His mind struggled with this. He then said, "What d'jer think's goin' to happen to the crew afore we falls in with our island?"

I was on the point of bluntly confessing my intention with a swift fancy in me that Kate was right, but was checked by my first motive of secrecy. So I curtly replied that I considered the *Earl of Leicester* undermanned. We had the Horn to pass where we might be thankful for a supplementary crew, even though they should be petticoated. I added that I looked to him and Harding to assist me.

He munched his biscuit and drank his black tea in silence.

"There'll be no objection to a bit of dancing afore sundown?" says he presently.

"A bit of dancing?"

"The men and their pardners."

"And you?"

He shook his head whilst one of his grave

smiles travelled, catspaw fashion, over his long face, and answered, "No, sir. I'm too old for the likes of that sorter vanity. But I'm for encouraging 'armless enjoyment. There's to be nothen melancholic in the constitootion. No groanin'—nothen liverish. I've read of Crummell. The theayters was locked up in them times; plum-duff was a sin 'cos it was a papish superstition. When a man talked pious he drawed his sperrit into his nose to jaw through. What followed? Horgies. I'm for natur, only she's got to be measured for a long skirt afore she can please *me*."

I burst out a-laughing, and left the table.

I was curious and anxious too, to see what sort of figure the men and their partners would make in dancing, also if others besides the "pardners" meant to dance. I had, at some earlier time, heard the strains of a fiddle in the 'tweendecks, and now, at this hour, drawing on to six o'clock, a good-looking young woman, of the shop-girl order, neat and slender, came on deck, accompanied by Kate Davis, and walked towards the fore-

castle, where the ship's company, saving the man at the wheel, and Harding, who had the look-out, stood waiting, all grins and restless shuffling, all in their best togs, too, and as clean as a bucket of salt water, and maybe one half comb and a single brush of scattered bristles for the whole forecastle could make them.

The neat and slender girl held a fiddle in one hand and a bow in the other. Jupe Jackson, at the head of the forecastle-ladder, convulsed his figure at her in an extraordinary bow, and not without a kind of wild, rough grace, handed and securely seated her on top of the booms stowed over the long-boat, where she at once fell to tuning up. All the women who had agreed to be married to the sailors by Brigstock, and live upon an island, now mounted on to the forecastle, Miss Cobbs leading the way. Brigstock received this lady, and took her into the head, where they seated themselves out of the road, but in a position that enabled them to see all that passed. A large number of the women went below, as though to mark their

scorn and disgust ; but I'll not say those passions were unmixed. I dare suppose there was a good deal of jealousy among them. Many, however, stayed and watched the scene from the main and quarter-decks.

The forecastle was a bad dancing-floor, with its litter of stowed anchors and fore-scuttle and windlass-gear. Probably the sailors would have used the quarter-deck, but for their fear of being crowded by the women, and jostled, and hindered. I took notice there were no refreshments. This pleased me. It proved, at all events, that Brigstock and his fellows were consistent in their views of equality ; they would not themselves eat and drink, nor give to their "pardners" what the rest of the emigrants did not get. It also exhibited a resolution of sobriety that was as good as a warranty of decorum.

I looked for Kate, wanting her at my side to view the queer, ocean pastime, but she was of those who were below. The sunshine was red ; it painted the hard breasts of sails that colour. The water rushed aft in a

cataractal race of foam from the driving bows. But the run of the sea was steady, nor had its volume the weight of the morning surge, and the dip of the head was as regular as the swing of a pendulum—a light, gentle, airy curtsy and toss, proper to put a livelier nimbleness into flying feet, and a spirit beyond the magic of the bow into the melodies of the catgut.

The girl on the booms screwed up her fiddle and fell to playing. Every man then seized his partner, and all danced. It was the sailor's favourite dance—the polka—the only shuffle, besides the hornpipe, he seems to care about.

The girls on the main-deck came together in groups, and nudged each other with frequent titters, and some would step away over to leeward, as though they could no longer condescend to look on, but they always came back again. It was a pretty picture, humorous with Brigstock's long face, and Miss Cobbs's bonnet alongside him, nodding with the music.

The sailors and the girls danced decorously

and well. The shadows of the canvas, and the red, moist light of the sun touched the revolving forms, fled and touched them again, and it happened that the red light was always upon them when the bows sank, and threw up the blue mass of ocean ahead, foam-streaked to the horizon, as high as the flying-jibboom end, as a background for the twisting and sliding figures. I liked, too, the sight of the pretty, slender girl on the booms, with her smiling face—her eyes on the dancers—aslant on the fiddle, and her delicate arm sawing gracefully, as the bough of a tree bends and lifts with a breeze.

The man at the wheel was Weatherwax, and his "pardner," Maggie Dobree, stood with Sarah Salmon, Harding's choice, near Brigstock and Miss Cobbs, looking on. There were nine couples, and they covered the forecastle with dancing shapes. I watched them for a quarter of an hour, and then went below.

In about an hour, I returned to see how the dancing progressed. The sun was gone, but a wide flush of dying sunlight filled the

fresh wind with a solemn, beautiful colour, like that which irradiates a cathedral through painted windows. I'd scarcely got my head out of the companion-way, when I heard a noise of screeching voices, and running to the break of the poop, I saw two women fighting abreast of the galley-door. The scene, with its crowds of women and sailors, the two hair-pulling and shrieking females, the shouts of men, and the yelping and laughter of girls, made that fore-end of the ship look like a street in a low neighbourhood, when an alley-row is in full flower. Brigstock, from the head of the forecastle steps, was roaring to the people to separate the women. Jupe Jackson was yelling, "Give over, Kate! There's no 'arm done! You're too much for her, with them fists o' yourn!"

Though the women were separated after a few minutes, they fought in that time with bloody desperation and tigerish rage. They pulled each other's hair down, they pulled each other's hat off, they scratched and bit and kicked, their dresses flew as they tugged

and clawed and sprang, and a light shawl streamed in rags from the shoulders of one of them like bunting wrecked with shot. The most dreadful part was the noise they made; they screeched like railway whistles; they howled like the jackals of the Hooghly; they moaned like midnight cats.

“What’s the matter there?” I called down the slant of the poop to Harding, who at once came up to me.

“Bit of a flare-up ’twixt Kate Davis and one of the gals,” he answered in his sour voice and sulky manner. “Along o’ jealousy, I allow. Can’t tell’ee the cause, sir.”

By this time the fight was over, the women had been separated, Kate Davis of the huge arms was being lovingly led on to the fore-castle by the man Jupe Jackson; the woman she had fought was coming aft in the heart of the crowd, every tongue in which was going. She was crying violently; the light was bad, but I thought I could see a very gridiron of red scars upon her face; her hat was gone, her hair tumbling and

blowing about her. Every now and again she'd oblige the crowd to stop while she checked her passion of weeping to shake her fist at the fore-castle.

Shortly after she had disappeared, Brigstock came aft.

"What's been wrong with you forward?" said I.

"That there Jupe," he answered, "has got hold of a pardner as is simply ate up with jealousy. Whilst dancing she tripped, hurt her foot, and had to rest. Jupe not being able to stand still, the fiddling lady keeping all on, jer see, calls to the females on the main-deck, and asks one of them to dance with him. There was two of my mate's pardners lying idle; but the feeling's strong against a man meddling with another's choice, and I'm for encouraging of it. Unfortunately, the party as steps up to Jupe was a girl he had a sorter mind to afore he settled on Kate Davis. There yer have it. The sight of Jupe sliding about with his arm round another female's waist was more'n that there Kate could stand; she hups and

saucy the gal as she passes ; the gal sneers ; Kate follows her off the fok'sle, and then comes the hollering and scratchin'."

"You'll want a law against jealousy in your constitootion," said I. "If this sort of thing's going to happen, stand by for a general capsizal long before you've roofed yourselves down and become a village."

"There'll be no more dancing forrards," said he grimly.

As he spoke the darkness of the night seemed to come with the noise of a gun out of the east in a sudden shrilling and piping gust of the trade breeze.

"Down foretopmast-stu'ns'l !" cried I, and in a few minutes the male dancers were cutting capers afresh as they shortened sail.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WOMEN'S PLOT.

FOR ten days all went quietly. We ran through the trade-wind into light head breezes, sighting nothing. Every morning and every afternoon my company of women assembled on the poop, and by this time they knew the names of the running gear, and of the sails and yards, and many of them could spring to the right rope, and let it go as promptly as a seaman. I taught them to pull with a will and all together. I found, however, that not more than seven were likely to prove of use at the helm. Three gave up after a few days, but their places were at once filled.

Kate was now playing the boatswain's pipe with some skill. She wore it round

her neck, and regularly called the female mariners to school with its music. But neither Brigstock, nor Harding, nor indeed any of the men helped me. Not that Brigstock was to blame. He was willing to teach, but the girls refused to learn from him. Alice Perry declared she would "knock off," if he taught, and her face was on fire with mutiny and hate as she said so. Fearing that if Brigstock obeyed my orders, the scheme would fall through, I told him not to trouble himself. It was not work I could impose as a duty, and as I did not choose to court the insolence of a refusal, I took no notice of Harding's neglect of my wishes.

Thus was it with us on the tenth day following that incident of the fight between the two girls.

It was a quiet morning, the sea swelling gently out of the south, but the wind north, a light breeze, and the ship was wrinkling along with almost square yards.

I had been having a long talk with Kate down in a corner of the quarter-deck. She still persisted in refusing to use the after

part of the ship. Her delicacy I considered extravagant, but I admired her spirit, and indeed was already fond of her, and in whatever she liked and chose to do she was to be allowed her own way. Had it not been for her sensitiveness, I'd have sent her twenty trifles out of the lazarette where the cabin stores were. She said she could not take things to eat and drink into a hole and enjoy them secretly and meanly, nor could she eat and drink them openly at table, where the sight of them would excite jealousy and ill-feeling, and lead to difficulties through the "pardners" going to the sailors and telling them that the captain was favouring Miss Darnley and nobody else.

To return. After my long chat with the girl, I stepped on to the poop, and going a little way aft, leaned over the rail to get a view of the quarter-boat as she hung at the davits, thinking all the while what a noble ship this was, and how memorable above most sea-feats would prove my preserving her and navigating her with women should the gods suffer me to achieve it.

Whilst musing, I heard my name called, and saw Alice Perry, who was on top of the poop-ladder looking towards me. Brigstock, on the other side of the deck called out, "Now, young woman, I must beg and pray of you not to come up here unless you're sent for."

She did not answer him, and I approached her.

"What do you want?" I said.

"Captain," she answered, "there's several of us 'ud like a few words with you in the cabin."

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" said I, struck by her face of angry determination; and I sent a glance forward, wondering if this coarsely handsome girl, with her fine, saucy eyes, and strong glaring teeth, had been affronted by any of the crew.

"We have something to say," she answered in a low voice, sinking her glance, after darting a look at Brigstock, "which you may think of the greatest consequence."

I peered over the rail, and observed a knot of women standing near the main-hatch

watching us. They all belonged to my company, as I called the girls I was training. I knew their names by this time. The group consisted of five : Emmy Read, Charlotte Brown, Flo Lewis, Fanny Pike, and Mabel Marshall. Wondering what their business with me could signify, I told Alice Perry to enter the cuddy with the others by the quarter-deck door, and I went to meet them by way of the companion-hatch.

They came to the table : I asked them to sit, and they were about to do so when Alice Perry, looking up at the open skylight, exclaimed, "Not 'ere. Brigstock'll be listening." They passed to the after end of the table, and sat down beside the shaft of mizzenmast.

"Who'll speak it?" said Alice Perry, looking at her companions.

"Yourself ; there's none better," answered one of them.

"Captain," said Alice Perry, standing up, "d'yer mind drawing closer ? Us girls have been talking things over, and we've come to tell you of our plot," said she, eyeing

me with her bold, extraordinarily spirited stare, her face full of character and resolution. "Since you've took us in 'and, and taught us all about the riggin' and sails of the ship, we feel hable to do without the sailors."

She paused. I smiled and said, "Not yet awhile. There's none good enough yet for the wheel in bad weather; and how should we manage aloft?"

"Give me a man's clothes. I'm not afraid of climbing," she cried.

"Lower, Miss Perry, lower," exclaimed the woman, Emmy Read.

"What's your plot, young ladies?" said I.

"Why are we to be carried into a part of the world that ain't in our road, and kept in this ship against our wills, hunting about for an island to suit the convenience of the beast Brigstock, and the beastess Cobbs, and the degraded lot that's goin' along with 'em?" said Alice Perry, with a sudden paleness of wild anger in her face.

"Lower, Miss Perry, lower," exclaimed Emmy Read.

"Tell the cap'n it, do," said a girl, whose

shrewd feminine sight was beginning to see impatience in me.

"Look here, sir," said Alice, sinking her voice, "our plot's this: we want you to tell us how to put the hatch on in the place where the crew sleeps, so as to imprison 'em. They must all be there. It could be done when you've ordered 'em all below, only we should want to be taught how to secure the cover of the square hole they passes through. As to Brigstock," she went on, growing a little shrill with the energy of her temper and the rapidity of her utterance, "if there's no excuse to send him into the men's place, and *you're* not willing to lay hands upon him, I'll engage with others to tie an' lock him up in any part you please to name."

They looked at me to observe the impression produced by these words. I was more interested and perhaps amused than astonished, and stepped under the skylight to make sure that Brigstock was not listening. Plenty of women were on the quarter-deck, but none at the door and windows as before, when I had talked in this cuddy.

“Your scheme,” said I, “is original and bold, but not practicable. That being so, I am placing myself in a desperately perilous position by listening to you.”

“Why? It’s our secret,” exclaimed one of the girls named Fanny Pike, a strong and hearty freckled lass of about eighteen.

“Have others besides you six spoken of this plot?”

“All us girls as you’re teaching of are in it,” answered Alice Perry.

“Suppose the men imprisoned; what’s the next thing to do?”

“Why, you’d navigate us to a place that’s near, if there *is* such a place, where we’d get help, and then you’d steer us straight to Australia,” said Alice.

“I should be for sailing straight ’ome, and ’anding Brigstock and the men and that ogious ’orror Cobbs over to the orficers of the law,” exclaimed a woman.

“Nothing in the shape of your scheme is to be thought of,” said I. “How could I handle a ship full of women, and not a soul in her able to go aloft,—in these seas, any-

way? It'll be different in the Pacific, after the weeks of training you'll have had by then—that's to say if you're willing to go on learning under me."

Alice Perry, with her knitted black eyebrows, daring, staring eyes, and heap of thick finger-swept black hair over her brow, looked savage as a murderess with disappointment.

"Why ain't we to be let to do it?" she cried. "Are we to be kept messing about in this ship to suit Cobbs and the others? *I'd* give 'em 'usbands, if I had my way! If it ain't to be done at once, why not later, when we're more perlick? As to climbing—try me! I'll find you others no more frightened of them ladders than if they was staircases."

"It's not to be thought of," I repeated firmly but soothingly. "And now we must invent some excuse for your waiting upon me. I must be ready with an answer to Brigstock."

Alice Perry, with a snap of her fingers and a fiery toss of her head, flounced out of the cuddy, hissing a tune through her teeth

in her rage as she went. Two of the others followed her. The remainder got up, but listened to me.

“You’ve sought information about the situation of the ship,” said I coolly. “It’s quite reasonable you should wish to know where we are, and how far distant Sydney may be from the island that suits the Brigstock lot. Tell that to Alice Perry and the others; we must stick to one story. And be advised by me; if I say no to your scheme, it’s because I’m a sailor, and intend, under God, that you shall keep your lives, and go ashore in Sydney in safety,” and making them a bow, I entered my cabin.

I was wise to be ready with an answer. No sooner did Brigstock catch sight of me when I went on deck than he stepped up and asked what the females wanted. My reply satisfied him; then, without seeming abruptness, I led him from the subject, and got him to talk of his scheme. This put him into a good temper. He asked me if I had looked through the ship’s papers carefully. I answered I had.

Are yer a judge of the value of goods, sir?" said he.

"What sort of goods?"

"The cargo of this ship, for instance?"

"No."

"We don't want to take in value more than what our wages comes to with a margin for a claim for having saved the ship, which we reckon we're entitled to, seeing we found a navigator for her, when she was without wan."

"You can't claim for the safety of the ship till you hear of her arrival."

"That's true. But if she's to go down arter we leave her, the cargo we take's better ashore than under water, ain't it?" he exclaimed, with a grave, knowing grin.

I broke off to measure the sun's height, and no more was said.

After dinner I went to the quarter-deck to find Kate, and brought her on the poop where I related the proposal the six women had made to me that morning.

"Will it be done?" she cried with an eagerness almost passionate.

“Why no,” I answered, and I repeated the reasons I had given the girls.

She looked up at the masts and said, “Why couldn’t you provide for the sailors to take off most of the sails before the women imprison them? There’d be no need to climb then. You’d leave sails enough to blow the ship forwards, but not enough to need removing if a heavy wind arose.”

“You’ll never command at sea.”

“My heart knows I would not for a million pounds.”

“What would the men think if I reduced canvas down to the topsails, say, in fine weather? And don’t you know that at any hour we might encounter a gale which would make that main-topsail up there too much for the ship by the whole of its reef-bands?”

“I don’t understand you. But I think the girls’ scheme audaciously clever and practicable.”

“Always sink your voice when we near that fellow Harding. Look at his ears—big as mantelpiece oyster-shells. We are going along very comfortably. Why do you want

to lock up the men, and so jeopardize the lives of the whole blessed lump of us? The fellows are behaving quite well. No rows, no affronts, no drink, no noise: *this* is the part of my yarn that won't be believed. The men are under the influence of Brigstock; let me help them to realize their island dream. I've no right to imprison them. They're not offering to run away with the ship, or planning anything scoundrelly. It suits my prospects to leave things as they are, Kate. I want to get money and command out of this hull, and who knows, for all your precious delicacy and fastidiousness, you'll not end in using the cuddy below on your voyage home?"

She started and stared and turned red.

"Passage home!" she echoed in a low voice full of astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"If the command of this ship is given to me at Sydney, and I offer you a passage home, will you accept?"

"Certainly not," she exclaimed with some fire. "Why should I go home? For the

sake of another passage out, after starving in a garret till the ship sailed ?”

I eyed her with a smile, and then asked her to step on the quarter-deck, and pipe my girls to school. She went at once, looking very puzzled, with much colour in her face. A sailor in the waist laughed uncontrollably when her pipe sounded. It was still very quiet weather, the right kind of day for helm practice. About fifteen girls assembled ; after waiting a minute or two, I inquired for the others. Susannah Corbin answered, “ Alice Perry says she ain’t a-going to learn any more.”

“ Alice Perry’s but one,” said I. “ Why don’t the rest come ? ”

“ Miss Perry’s been going about asking us not to,” answered the girl.

I made no remark, though I was extremely vexed. It looked as if my scheme of a company of female mariners must fall to pieces. If it failed me, I saw insuperable difficulties, along with the blankest disappointment of my secret earnest hopes. However, I kept my temper and held my tongue, and carrying

the women aft, bade the helmsman stand aside, and gave three of the girls a lesson at the wheel. I say three—only that number out of the fifteen were good for anything at the helm. The other four who were better than these were amongst those who had absented themselves.

This training job, first at the wheel, then at going the rounds, making the girls pull together to a song, and the like, occupied two hours. During much of this time Alice Perry and the rest of my women watched us from various parts of the deck; Alice commonly in a posture of defiance, her head thrown back, her arms crossed upon her breast, a sneering expression upon her face.

I went up to her when my work with the others was over, and asked her to step with me into the cuddy.

“Alone?” she exclaimed, in a sulky voice.

“Yes.”

“What do yer want?”

“A short chat.”

She followed me into the cuddy, stepping with a sullen swing of her body. I stopped

her at the foremost end of the cabin-table, so that all on the quarter-deck should have us in sight. I could see now that she had the spirit of a devil. Yet it was because of her fierce temper and lawless looks that I wanted her; indeed, she was the best of my "hands," and I meant that in some time to come she should be breeked and show the way aloft.

So I talked to her in the kindest tones I could assume. There was here now a necessity to be candid; I must take my chance of my plans reaching the fore-castle. I said bluntly I intended to work the ship to Sydney with the aid of the women after the crew had left her. I told her what might happen if we shipped strangers out of those South Seas—spun yarns of crimes committed by seamen in the islands—in the Caroline and Fiji groups particularly—and presently had the satisfaction of finding her listening with her mouth open and her breathing quick, as though she was reading an exciting story.

Brigstock came into the cuddy, and passed us to enter his cabin. He looked at us with an air of gloomy surprise. I brought the

girl to the other side of the table, and proceeded to reason with her in a sunk voice. The women on the quarter-deck glanced in as they passed the door. Once a group came to a stand on the threshold; they were of that lot of my party of girls whom Alice Perry had talked into keeping away. I motioned them off, and they went away arm-in-arm, one striking up, "Hever of Thee!" and the rest joining in.

"Miss Alice," said I, softly and coaxingly to this handsome young devil of a housemaid, for that was her walk, I recollect; "I can't do without you. You are the daisy of my company. I'll put you into a man's clothes when the seamen are gone. A sweet sailor you'll make. When we get to Sydney, they'll print your likeness in the papers. You know you're handsome."

At this she laughed. What white teeth it has! thought I.

"You're handsome now, and when we cast anchor in Sydney Bay, you'll have been brave. Beauty and courage in a woman, out in the Colonies, are thought more of than a

fortune in England. I shall be dancing at your wedding, my dear, though I may not be two months in Australia."

"Garn!" she exclaimed, trying to hold her face, but her eyes were bright with delight. Gratification was too strong, and she burst into another laugh.

"Ain't he coddin' her just!" said a woman, looking in at one of the windows.

I continued to flatter her a while longer, finding she liked it; then guessing I had talked enough, I took her on to the quarter-deck, and left her.

The weather that night was wonderfully quiet. The wind had shifted, and blew abeam. When I was on deck at two bells, nine o'clock, the gloom was deepened by a sort of vapourish thickness, and the stars were so few you could have counted them. I found Brigstock conversing with three of the seamen at the head of the poop-ladder. They did not suspect my presence, but their voices were pitched in a low, growling key, as though they were anxious not to be overheard. On perceiving me, the men slunk down the ladder,

and Brigstock went to leeward and walked aft, mute as a figure-head.

I made nothing of this, merely supposing that they had been talking over their island scheme.

All the women were under hatches. The decks were silent, and deserted to the sight. No sheen of light was visible anywhere except in the skylight, under which the cabin-lamp was burning. The ship floated through the stillness and the darkness of the sea in a bulk of defined hard shadow, like the base of a hill, upon whose sides and shoulders, at midnight, a white mist sleeps. Brigstock remained standing beside the man at the helm. They both talked, but in very low voices. I considered this conversation with the helmsman a piece of insolent behaviour in Brigstock, seeing that I was on deck. But always when it came to any passion like resentment in me, I felt the underlying mockery of my situation, and was silent.

The helmsman was Isaac Coffin; I knew him by his voice. I paced quietly, with one of Captain Halcrow's cigars in my mouth, and

abandoned myself to twenty pleasing dreams of the future. My thoughts ran swiftly; they went to the *Hebe* and to the *Caroline*, and back again to Blathford, and my summer rambles with Kate, then, with greater velocity than light, ahead to Sydney, where I *realized* this ship's arrival, and smiled at the vision of a crew of women in the male duds of the vessel's slop-chests.

Whilst I was thus thinking, nothing disturbing the stillness but the subdued growling of the voices at the wheel, and a dim noise of passing waters, like to the sound of autumn leaves gently rustling over a gravel path, I heard a most extraordinary moaning high up in the air. I stopped thunderstruck, and looked straight up, where a pallid star was trembling, as though I expected to behold a flight of shadowy spirits over our masthead. To this moment, I don't know what that noise was, unless, indeed, it was some mighty procession of sea-fowl, very high in air, and raising cries that they might keep together.

A more melancholy, sighing note never

sounded through the hush of ocean. It was faint and female in tone, a strange, long-drawn wailing. It died out slowly, as the sound of a railway train dies along a valley on a quiet night.

“Good God, Isaac, what was it?” exclaimed Brigstock.

I went aft, and exclaimed, “Did you ever hear the like of that noise before?”

“Sort o’ prophecy, I allow,” said Coffin.

“Of what?”

“Of trouble—of trouble,” rumbled Brigstock in a gruff, quarrelsome voice, and clearly wishing not to converse with me, he rolled away forward, and vanished off the poop.

I ascribed the man’s manner to some irrational fit of ill-temper, such as frequently visits seamen. Sailors are fed on food in the last degree indigestible. The influence of the liver upon the brain is amongst those things which make us know how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; a sailor’s curses, maledictions, and blasphemies are scarcely more than a forecastle reproduction, or expression

of beef and pork, salted into an innutritious hardness, maddening to soul and body. I considered Brigstock's digestion as upset, and resumed my walk after a glance at the compass-card.

Presently I heard voices forward. I could not distinguish accents nor shapes, but judged by the grumbling that more than the watch were talking together; certainly Brigstock was one of the speakers. I would not seem to listen by pausing, but now a sudden anxiety fell upon me. I did not understand the meaning of that black, secret council, and every time I approached the break of the poop, I suspended my breathing, and bent my ear most strenuously, but never once caught a syllable.

On a sudden, a light glimmered in the black oblong of the main-hatch, down which the leg of the windsail was working as though some gigantic white serpent were making its way out of the 'tweendecks towards the main masthead. The figure of a woman holding a lantern came up. She approached the foot of the poop-ladder, at the head of which I was

now standing. The light she held revealed her : it was Miss Cobbs. I instantly called to know what she wanted. She answered in tones of horror and agitation—

“One of the women, Mary Lonney, has cut her throat.”

I flung my cigar away, and ran down the ladder, exclaiming, “Is she dead?”

As I said this, the men who had been talking forward came aft in a hurried tread, full of alarm. It was that sort of rush of feet you'll hear at sea, when an order whose instant execution means life or death is shouted out.

“What is it?” shouted Brigstock, and in a trice, seven or eight seamen were all about Miss Cobbs, their forms thrown up by the light she held.

“Oh, Thomas,” cried the matron, “one of the women's cut her throat.”

“That'll be the meaning of the noise in the air,” said a voice.

I saw a huddle of figures, seemingly in their bedclothes, like a pale cloud on the white steps in the main-hatch.

“Lead me to the woman, Miss Cobbs,” said I.

“Mr. Morgan,” exclaimed Brigstock, thrusting up close and defiantly, and speaking fiercely with passion, though slowly, “you’re onfaithful to yer trust, and a villain, and we dorn’t mean to have anything more to do with you.”

I sprang back a step with my blood on fire, and clenching my fists, and throwing myself into a posture of defence, I cried, “Villain, is it! You dog!”

Even as I spoke, I was seized by four men—they and others letting fly fifty yells and shouts of abuse, reproach, insult, curses—and as helpless as though heavily ironed, I was rushed into the cuddy and tumbled headlong into my cabin.

CHAPTER IX.

IMPRISONED.

THEY flung me into the cabin with so much violence that I was in a manner stunned. I fell upon my knees, but got up in a moment, and stood with my hand upon the edge of the bunk, whilst I fetched my breath and collected myself.

The cabin was pitch dark. After my panting had sobered into measured breathing, I groped for a match, and lighted the cabin-lamp, and observing blood on my hand, looked in the glass, and beheld the skin over my left eyebrow broken, and the wound bleeding. The injury was trifling; I bathed it, and the cold water was as helpful as a tonic draught.

Twice now had I been locked up in this cabin. What did Brigstock intend? What

did he imagine he had discovered against me? My heart raged when I thought of how I had been used and addressed; how I had been called villain, sworn at, dragged with curses to this cabin like a savage, dangerous dog to its chain and kennel. What had I done? Not being able to answer that, I thought, What's the fresh scheme the men have in their heads? I tried to recall any piece of behaviour, any sentence or look in Brigstock or the others, to give me a hint. Had they abandoned their resolution to settle an island? If so, they had forced their new humour with amazing swiftness upon Brigstock, who certainly, down to a recent hour, was as much in earnest in his South Sea project as ever I had found him.

They were without a navigator. What would they do?

As realization of the significance of the men's treatment of me grew, my wits seemed to leave me: I paced the cabin with my soul racked with rage. My splendid dream of preserving and carrying this ship into safety was ended! The trouble I had taken in

training the women was wasted toil, made useless in a few minutes, as one might say. I felt ill as though fever-stricken. It was not only the insult, the alley-bully usage of me, the disappointment; mingled with the violent sensations of that time was the shock of the news Miss Cobbs had given me. Even at the very moment of hearing that a woman had cut her throat, I was called villain, brutally laid hold of, flung like a slaughtered beast into this cabin, and locked up.

Some brandy was in the locker, and cold water in a bracketed decanter. I mixed a drink, and sat down to think and listen. All was silent in the cuddy; overhead sounded occasionally the creaking of a pair of boots. Sometimes I seemed to hear faintly a sound of men's and women's voices. I sought to hearten myself by thinking that the crew could not do without me; but I found no hope in that reflection when I recollected Brigstock's insult and the men's behaviour.

The hours rolled by. If any one entered the cuddy, I did not hear him. All my speculations now ran in the direction of the

crew's intentions. I heard no bells, and was without a watch. Though sleepless with feverish excitement, I stretched myself along in my bunk, where I lay with my head full of burning thoughts.

I slept at last for an hour or two, and when I awoke, the day had broken. I glanced through the port-hole, and found the weather gloomy and thick, a look of fine drizzling rain in the atmosphere, the wind a light breeze abeam, and a sluggish lift of grey swell out of the south. We were in motion; I marked the passage of a patch of froth, and the speed was about four.

Where were the crew heading the vessel for, and what did they mean to do with her? My short spell of rest had done me good; I could think without passion; but heavy anxiety weighed upon my spirits.

It might have been about eight o'clock when the key was turned, and Gouger stepped in with some breakfast. He put the tray rudely down on the deck with a scowl on his face, and went out, heeding me no more than had the cabin been empty,

though he took care to lock the door. The tray was heaped with the usual stuff—a cup of black tea, biscuit, preserved meat, a piece of cold pork; they did not mean to starve me. I was somewhat cheered by the sight of this food, and ate with tolerable appetite.

While breakfasting I heard voices in the cuddy; I arrested the movements of my jaws to listen. Brigstock's and Harding's voices were easily recognizable; I also thought I could distinguish Miss Cobbs's high notes, and there was a fourth, one of the seamen, probably Jackson. The bulkheads were thick, and the conversation hard to catch. I heard Brigstock say, "The course is right. She can't hurt as she goes. Something's bound to be coming along soon."

"It's a pity," said Miss Cobbs, "that he should have proved such a treacherous wretch. All was going on so well."

Harding said something in his deep, sour tone. Brigstock exclaimed, "Ay, ay, I should have thought he'd got more sense." The voices then sank, and presently ceased.

What was the treachery I was suspected

of? Brigstock's remark that something was bound to come along soon was the same as saying that they were on the look-out for a new navigator. How would they dispose of me? I asked of God that I might not be inhumanly used. I had already since sailing from Bristol suffered so much, experienced such quick and rapid changes, that a few weeks had compassed more for me than is endured by men in half a century of seafaring. The idea of having to forfeit this ship, whose preservation had been the glowing star of my future, was an anguish of disappointment. What would Kate and the rest of the women who were not partners think? Lord, thought I, if that devil-possessed girl, Alice Perry, would but work out her plot *now*! Will it enter Kate's head to advise her and the others to clap the hatches on such men as might be below at the time, and secure the rest by the strength and passion of numbers? Suppose six of them trapped; it might not be hard to imprison the other six by stratagems, by calling one here and another there, thus

separating them, then by the women flinging themselves upon the fellows.

The morning slipped away ; nobody came to my cabin. I was sensible of a silence hanging upon the ship ; the quiet was not due to my being in a part of her where all noises from the deck reached me dimly : whence I suspected that the men were keeping a large portion of the women at a time below, fearing trouble. Or was it the influence and awe of death upon the ship that held her hushed ? The shock of suicide would be violent throughout those 'tween-decks of women. By this time too, they had doubtless buried the body, and the gloom of that business would be upon the spirits of the people, who'd also be restless and frightened, wild in their whispers and looks—to the degree of making the sailors afraid of them, and of keeping half of them under—on learning that I was a prisoner, and the ship without a navigator.

At about one the young seaman Gouger brought me my dinner. I addressed him, but he neither answered nor looked at me.

He had clearly received his instructions, and went out with rude defiant motions of his body, locking the door noisily after him.

The afternoon passed; a second night came. There was oil in my berth; I trimmed and lighted the lamp, and tried to divert my mind by reading a volume of tales I took from the shelf, but could not fix my attention. I lighted a cigar, and smoked in my bunk with my legs over the edge, lost in gloomy, anxious thoughts. I had expected a visit from Brigstock, and found something sinister in his absence. Of what was I guilty? Why did not the fellow come down into my cabin and charge me, and hear me, and give me a chance to prove I had been and still was loyal to the office the crew had tricked me into accepting?

I was a bit unmanned by my confinement, by the suspense I was kept in, by a passion of disappointment, fiery and wasting. I had slept but little; this night I did not close my eyes; I started at every sound, and once, hearing a footstep in the cuddy just outside my door, I sprang from my bunk and seized

a dinner-knife from the supper-tray, resolved if I was to be dealt with like a rat in a hole, that the business should be hot and bloody for more than one.

All these fears my secret instincts pronounced irrational; but frightened I was nevertheless, and I lay sleepless, every sound making my heart loud in my ears.

Throughout the night the weather was quiet but thick; the breeze blew damp and chill through my open port-hole, the bleaker, perhaps, for the melancholy noises of the sea as it washed to the bends, falling away in a low moaning charged with a snakish stealthy hissing. I kept the lamp alight, and frequently glanced at the compass, and observed that they held the ship sailing along the course I had left her heading.

Daybreak found me with my face at the port-hole, gazing at the disc of ocean the sea-window framed. I watched the green of the east sifting westwards; the shape of the near surge grew defined, and the horizon ran hard and black as the rim of an ebony table against the pale heavens. The weather had cleared,

but in as much of the heavens as I could command, I saw the shadows of squall-clouds, and a threat of wet in long streaks of liquid grey vapour hanging low over the western sea-line.

The sun had scarcely risen when there was a commotion overhead. They were trimming sail, I thought. Coils of rope were flung down. The hoarse notes of seamen singing out reached me, and I guessed by the confused shuffling of feet that the main-brace was stretched along. The wind had been something abaft the beam. Presently the compass showed that the helm had been shifted so as to bring the breeze a couple of points more forward. The rolling of the ship wanted the buoyancy of the propelled hull; and, on taking another glance through the port-hole, I saw that the vessel had been brought to a stand.

An hour passed, during which all was quiet. Not a sound of any sort was there, save the slopping of water under the port-hole. The sea was of a sallow blue; a small squall of rain veiled the horizon with a

slanting grey mist right abreast of me ; a rainbow was flickering upon the delicate crystal dust ; whilst I watched this squall its skirts thinned to the southward, and exposed the canvas of a vessel, bright as polished resplendent steel in the moist flash of sun it caught as the weeping shadow left it.

Whilst I looked, easily conceiving the trick Brigstock was going to play, Gouger unlocked the door and entered with my breakfast. I glanced over my shoulder, then went on watching the distant vessel. He put the tray down as before, and went out without speaking a word. I often recall but not with wonder, the effect of that young brute's silence upon me. The part of this new tragic passage hardest to bear was the dumb entrance of that dog with my meals. His behaviour deepened suspense ; it was a sort of mute black hint of what I was to expect ; and then, again, there was the irritation of its insolence.

The sail speedily slid out of the sphere of the port-hole. Not being able to see, I

strained my hearing, wondering whether she would pass within hail, if she would stop to speak to us, if she would send a boat, and be tricked, as the *Caroline* had.

Another long hour passed : the breeze was steady, with an occasional shriek of wet squall through it ; westwards the liquid grey streaks had risen, and the horizon was vague. On a sudden, whether owing to a shift of our helm, the sail came sliding fair into the round frame of the port. She was a large three-masted schooner, scarcely less than three hundred tons in burthen, with immensely lofty, whip-like masts. The red flag of the English Merchant Service was flying at her mizzenmast-head. She lay all shaking within hailing distance, bowing the sea with flashes of streaming sheathing ; her shivering sails stood out in a dead, sickly white against the pouring grey background afar. Several men were looking at our ship over her forecastle-rail ; as she leaned her white decks towards us on the heave of the swell, her little brass-bound wheel glowed like a circle of golden light in the grasp of

the man at it; close beside the helm stood a tall figure in the hat of a bandit, and a short monkey-jacket. I saw him step to the rail, and his cry came faintly along to my ears, but in the open above it doubtless sounded clear as a bell, for a voice I instantly recognized as Brigstock's bawled out—

“The *Earl of Leicester*, from Madras for the River Thames.”

Another question, in a dim, halloaing note, came along on the light breeze from the schooner. Brigstock answered—

“We're in great distress. All 'ands have perished but us two. We can't board jer. My mate here's too ill to take a hoar.”

This man's ambition, thought I, is to be the father of a South Sea settlement, whose government is to be based on truth first of all!

I did not need to go on deck to see the picture. I figured one of the men at the wheel in a drooping posture, as though faint; Brigstock, with long, forlorn countenance, in an attitude of entreaty; the decks empty,

as when Blades and I were the victims of the dodge. The emigrants, of course, were under hatches. Doubtless the main-hatch had been closed whilst they were at breakfast; otherwise the women, guessing why they were to be sent below, through knowing I was locked up, and through seeing the approaching vessel—recollecting, also, the spell of suffocation they had undergone whilst I was being manœuvred into the ship—might have given the men so much trouble as to kill this opportunity of tricking a navigator into the vessel.

One or two more cries came from the schooner. By this time she had drifted out of the port-hole, nor did Brigstock's answers distinctly reach me, owing to his having shifted his station, which had been exactly over my head. Now, by the silence that fell, I guessed the stranger was sending a boat. My heart beat hard. What did the fellows intend to do with me? Presently I heard the muffled chafing of oars in rowlocks, and the noise of the shearing of a boat's sharp stem, driving close on our quarter to pass

under the counter. The suspense was horrible, my impatience maddening. After a little, voices rumbled in the cuddy, whence I gathered that some of the men had softly stolen into that interior, unheard by me, to give the new-comer from the schooner the sort of greeting I had received; in other words, to overawe him with the sight of their numbers. A minute after, a hoarse voice bawled out—

“I’ll be damned if you do! Fire me if this han’t worse than being Shanghaied!”

This was followed by a roaring out of curses, all in the same voice; the seamen present joined in, and such a hellish hulla-baloo followed, that I held my breath, expecting to hear cries of murder and groans. It seemed as if more than one of the schooner’s men had come below; but I was mistaken. A prodigious noise of scuffling arose. The seamen appeared to have found their match. Blasphemies flew thick as hail in an electric squall; surging figures bumped with volcanic shocks against the bulkheads.

“Why don’t yer take it quietly?” Brigstock bellowed.

But though the heroic victim had been a giant, he must still have been too few as one man for the number who had fallen upon him. Yet I reckoned it took them a full five minutes of heaving, wrestling, struggling, cursing, to get the fellow stowed in a cabin, where he pounded so furiously with boots and fists, shouting all the while with hurricane lungs to be let out, that I expected to hear him burst clean through the massive bulkhead.

Hope had freshened in me whilst the uproar outside was going on. I thought to myself, the crew are not likely to depend upon such services as they must expect from the man they have brutally maltreated and locked up. They’ll look to me again, and give me a chance of hearing what I am suspected of. But, even whilst I thus thought, the key in my door was turned, the door itself rudely flung open, and Brigstock and two others, Hull and Luddy, appeared.

“Put on your cap, and follow us,” said

Brigstock, breathing short after the recent struggle, and discovering marks upon his face, and in his collar and cravat, of having been roughly handled. "We don't want to lose no time."

Here the prisoner in the berth opposite fell to kicking and pounding afresh with extraordinary violence, bawling that he'd cut the livers out of the whole ship's company when he got at them, and swearing diabolically as he vociferated the threat.

"What have I done to merit this treatment?" I asked.

"*You* know," answered Brigstock, with an ugly scowl. "Come on."

The fellows beside him eyed me with the utmost malevolence, and there was a black threat in every posture and gesture of theirs, even in those few moments of pause. Luddy's lip was cut; his chin was covered with blood. All three were in a dangerous temper. I knew myself to be white in the face, and was sick with the swift pulsing of my heart. Consider! I had been locked up for many hours, in a continual state of wear-

ing, desperate suspense, and now here were these fellows commanding me to follow them—to be how dealt with? Yet, though I could not control my colour, I had my agitation well in grasp. I put my hat on, buttoned my jacket, and followed Brigstock up the companion-steps, Luddy following at my heels, the other remaining below, possibly to watch beside the entrapped man's door.

All to windward was grey with wet, and a thin drizzle, but not of a concealing sort, was driving along with the wind, which had freshened a trifle. None of the women were to be seen; but, though the gratings were on the main-hatch, no tarpaulins hid them. The fore and after yards had been braced, to give the vessel a distressed, ill-conditioned look. All three topgallant-halliards had been let go, the mainsail clumsily hauled up, and the maintopsail laid to the mast. Still the cunning rogues had not contrived the same perfect picture of distress which had greeted Blades's and my eyes.

The two vessels had drifted apart, and the schooner lay about a mile distant, on the

Earl of Leicester's quarter. I took in all that I am telling you in a single sweep of the eye. No time for a longer look was allowed. Brigstock ran to the lee rail, and sang down, "Bring your boat to the main-chains, and put this gentleman aboard your schooner."

He then turned quickly upon me, and with a fierceness I should never have suspected in so formal, solemn, austere a devil, bawled, "Come! Jump in, and thank yer God yer've fallen into humane hands," by which I understood he meant himself and the crew.

I went to the rail without a word, meaning to drop into the main-chains, and so gain the boat; but when I looked over I saw that she was holding off, with the three men in her staring like madmen, evidently scenting a stratagem from the sight of the several seamen whose figures were clear in their view.

"Haul in and take this man," said Brigstock.

"Where's our second mate?" sung out the fellow in the boat's bows.

I see him now, a dingy blotch of face, scarcely visible for hair, surmounted by an old glazed hat without a brim.

“He’s a-going to stop along with us. Haul in, I tell yer. This gen’man’ll explain to your captain when yer put him aboard.”

“’Splain what?” roared the man in the bow of the boat.

“Haul in, I tell yer.”

“We thought you was only two men?” cried another of the fellows in the boat, in loud, howling tones, full of astonishment and fear.

As though operated on by one impulse, hardly had this man shouted when the three flopped down on the thwarts, chucked their oars over, and pulled away for the schooner with all their might.

CHAPTER X.

ADRIFT.

BRIGSTOCK stood idly looking for a moment or two at the receding boat. He then shouted out, "He must put hisself aboard. Bill—Jupe—jump aft, and lower away the gig. She'll be light enough for him to handle."

Three or four men rushed to do his bidding. The gig was the long, light, slender boat that hung by davits outside, on a line with the taffrail. The sea ran without weight, the ship was without way and pitched softly, and the boat, with two men in her, sank securely to the water's surface where the blocks were unhooked, and in a few minutes they had got her alongside, close against the lee main-chains.

Brigstock, standing near me, had watched

these proceedings in silence. At the moment that the boat was lowered, I cried in a sudden passion—

“Mr. Brigstock, what have I done to deserve this treatment?”

He slowly turned his face, dark with temper, and said—

“I called yer villain, and a villain y’ are. Yer’d have betrayed us for all yer fine promises, though we used jer as a gemman, and obeyed jer orders, and gave yer the cabin to live in.”

He clenched both fists, and literally shook with wrath.

At the sound of our voices, the rest of the crew, who were scattered about the poop, evidently waiting for the signal to trim sail, gathered about us with looks so full of menace, mutiny, murder, that I instinctively felt if I did not quit this ship with a dumb tongue, a few minutes might find me a slain man, cut to the heart by a sheath knife, overboard, to plumb depths whose soundings I should never be able to report. And yet a madness of temper urged me to exclaim—

"I'm no villain. I swear by my God I was serving you faithfully!"

"What's your notion of faithfulness?" roared Harding, thrusting his bearded, sour face in a butting way close into mine. "Is it to batten men down—men you're a-pro-fessing to sarve, for to carry them to a port, and then give 'em up, *you* to pocket all the swag, and all the good as is to come along out of the job!" He wagged his head at me in his rage.

"Leave him be!" thundered Brigstock, putting his shoulder into the chest of the man Sampson, and heaving him halfway across the deck. "We've done so far without *that*, and we want none *now*."

"On deck there," hailed a voice from the boat alongside.

"Over with yer!" cried Brigstock, laying a heavy hand upon my shoulder. "The schooner'll pick yer up."

I shook the fellow's paw off, giving him a look of bitter reproach and hate, and half-crazy with disappointment, humiliation, the sense of atrocious injustice, I dropped into

the main-chains, and jumped into the gig. The two men got out of the boat as I entered her. One had held to a channel-plate by a boat-hook; when he dropped the thing and jumped out, the boat was adrift.

There seemed an angry wobble of waters; that was the sensation of her short, abrupt jumps—to me, fresh from the comparative *terra firma* of the ship's deck. I stood, thick in head, and blind in vision, with a sort of stupefaction of brain, till a leap of the boat flung me on to a thwart. The shock gave me my mind. Heavenly God! thought I, if I don't make for the schooner, I shall be adrift and alone! Will she receive me? And now I was possessed by a wild fear for my life, an unmanly horror, a panic terror. Never before had my nerves so betrayed me.

There were four oars in the boat, and a small mast and lugsail. She was the captain's gig, and a smart boat with bright gratings, and brass rowlocks, dangling by sennit laniards. I threw her oars out, and got her head round on a line with the schooner. The

swell ran with a lift and fall of fold that sunk the boat in a valley and poised her as on a hill, and the surface of those volumes of brine snapped and hissed with little seas. The gig went clear of the ship's quarter, and when out of the shadow and height of her—for her rolling hull and towering spaces of sail blocked the sight as a terrace of cliff might—I found it was raining; no longer a thin drizzle, but driving lines of wet, grey everywhere, and in places thick as smoke.

The schooner hung about a mile to windward, swollen and dim in the smother. She came and went and went and came regularly as a clock ticks as the swell swallowed or hoisted me.

On board the ship they trimmed sail the moment I had gone clear. The breeze was a beam wind for her course, and they braced to it, boarding the main-tack and manning the maintopgallant-halliards as smartly as twenty men might ordinarily work that machinery of tackles. The fine ship felt the pressure promptly; she heeled away from the breeze, and as her stern came dead

on end, with a moist glitter of cabin windows, and a hand on the taffrail getting the gig's falls inboards, the white water leapt from her bends, and the foam of her forming wake boiled about her rudder.

When I saw how thick the weather was, and how the shadow of the rain was still blackening into the atmosphere, I dropped the oars and stood up in the boat, and sent a long scream of despair at the figure of the fellow on the taffrail of the departing vessel ; but I question if he heard me, I doubt indeed if he saw me. A few ship's lengths would carry one's eyes into blindness on such a day as that. Nay, even whilst I watched, with a breaking heart, and the chill and darkness of death upon my spirits, the ship died into shadow in the rain.

The gig was light for a ship's boat, but heavy for one man to pull. The schooner was dead to windward, vague as a reflection in a mirror on which you have breathed, and all between was the ridging and feathering of the grey seas, more spiteful than the wind made them for the stubborn heave of

the swell athwart their course. I soon saw I should be able to do nothing by rowing; indeed, the state of my mind had impaired me physically. I had lost my strength. I threw the oars in and stepped the mast, but the boat was narrow; it was to be a sheer beat to windward, and the lug was all too big for that dead-on-end breeze and jump of waters. So I stretched the sail along and tied a couple of reefs in it, drifting away to leeward meanwhile like the shadow of a bird floating down the wind, and when I had mastheaded the fragment of canvas, hauled the sheet aft, and got me to the yoke-lines, the ship was gone in the thickness, and away on the starboard bow—heading off perforce as my boat was—I beheld the schooner gathering way, and slowly forging northwards, with her white sails breaking like the light of dawn through a sand-coloured squall of wet she was in the heart of.

I held on; my seamanship was at a loss. The schooner having got her boat, was proceeding on her voyage, making the best of

a business her people could only wonder at and curse as a stratagem that might betray them into bloody results if they chased with the idea of looking further into it. That I was seen, I will not say; the gleam of my little white sail would blend with the sheeting of froth, and dance unnoticed in the thickness.

What was to be done? Here was I adrift in an open boat without a drop of water to drink, without a crumb of biscuit to eat. The mere look of the schooner, dim as she was, with her leaning spars and forging forefoot and lofty spread of canvas, was such a hint of speed when the full power of the breeze should urge her, that my immediate intention to shift the helm, and follow her on a parallel line, with a prayer for the weather to clear, that I might be seen—fell dead. A second resolution seized me. I slackened away the sheet, and put the boat's head for the ship, which was out of sight, but whose bearings I judged of by the blowing of the wind. My poor miserable hope was that, if the weather brightened, they'd see me, now my sail was hoisted, have

mercy, and receive me, to tranship me afterwards, if occasion for *that* was not ended by my coming to a good understanding with them.

I tried to pierce the vaporous thickness of rain. The swell ran at me; each time I rose to the height of a brow that was all a-snarl with hissing white salt under the shrill thongs of the breeze, I'd send a devouring look ahead, and sometimes fancy I saw a leaning square blotch far off. But the smother would close down again upon the sea, and leave me a view of scarce two miles of cold dark grey waters, running jagged and brokenly over the folds swelling northwards. Yet my boat made good weather. She leapt drily, and ran like a streak of foam up the liquid acclivities, and fled buoyant as a running Mother Carey's fowl down into the hollows.

I was sure they had despatched me to board the schooner, if I could, without the least concern whether I reached her or not. The sea had been shrouded when I left the ship. Brigstock knew it, and he

also knew, as a seaman, that it was next to certain I should miss the schooner and perish. It was like murdering me! What then on a sudden had made fiends of men whom I had found or fancied respectable, steady sailors, able to practise—not moderation, but—abstinence, the hardest of all virtues, whether on sea or land?

I understood the reason, and cursed my folly. They had got scent of the plot my company of women had hatched and talked to me about. Had not Brigstock savagely said as much before I went over the side? There had been misrepresentation; the fellows were illiterate sailors, incapable of distinguishing, full of rough passions not hard to influence into criminal impulses. I guessed their women had had a hand in it; they had gone from the 'tweendecks where my own party of females had been talking, and told the men, exaggerating their report into lies, that I and the women I was making sailors of were concerting a plot to imprison Brigstock and the crew under hatches. That would be enough! There was no one to say

them nay. They'd not have taken a denial from me, and therefore never charged me. The wonder is they did not cut my throat or hang me.

From the very bottom of my soul rose my curses on my own stupidity. The whole thing was clear now—made clear by Brigstock's parting words. Had I confessed my sole object in disciplining the women, they never would have supposed me guilty to such a degree as not to challenge and provide me with a chance to disprove the 'tween-deck lies.

Thus went my thoughts as the boat slipped along. My spirits were at their lowest with despair. The afternoon was fast going; the thickness had a settled look. There was no appearance of the sky clearing before the night fell. The chase was a hopeless one whilst the breeze held, for the object I pursued was a full-rigged sailing-ship, whose speed, compared to the gig's, was as five to one, and there would be no possibility of any deliverance by her unless it fell calm, and she lay in sight, and I could use my oars. I

was wet to the skin, but too seasoned as a seaman to heed that. The dreadfulest part was my being without food or drink—nay, not so much as a sup of spirits to give me an instant's heart. And oh! the devouring rage of disappointment when I thought of Kate, of the fine ship, of what I had lost, of the base, obscure death that seemed at hand—a rat's end!—to perish *thus* under the weeping blank up there, and out of the very sight of God himself!

It was not blowing harder, but it was as thick as ever with wet when the shadow of the night came along. I lowered the sail to make a house of, unstepped the mast, and frapped it and the oars into a sheaf, which I flung overboard for a sea-anchor to ride to—with a curse as I did so, so vile a savage was I then with despair and suffering. I was parched with thirst, hating life, yet felt an inward shrinking from death. Pulling the sail about me, I lay down in the stern-sheets. I'll not recite the miseries of that night; sufferings as great have been endured by men adrift and in open boats, and on rafts,

but none greater, no, not after days—no, not even when it had come to the eating of human flesh.

It was still thick at daybreak, with a heavy swell, always from the southward, little wind, and rain in places. So much had fallen in the night that I got a draught out of the bottom of the boat. I knelt down and sucked it up like a horse. It was slightly brackish with the impregnation of the timber by brine, but sweet as a draught of foaming soda-water to my throat. There was plenty, but no vessel to hold it, and it washed about under the thwarts as the boat tumbled.

I hauled in the sea-anchor, stepped the mast, and hoisted the sail with both reefs out, shaping my course by the sulky redness in the east. My course! By which I mean the ship, for she was probably the nearest to me of any craft in those seas then—not, perhaps, thirty miles off, to be sneaked into sight amid light baffling airs should the horizon clear and give me three leagues of view before sundown.

All that day it blew a light north-westerly

wind. The sun showed at intervals, but most part of the sky was a stretch of heaped-up vapour, swelled and soft and moist, like wet smoke, if you can imagine the thing. It never ceased to rain in one place or another, and sometimes it fell in a living sheet off the edge of a cloud right overhead. Thus I got some water to drink. The swell was small, and sluggish as liquid lead; the boat floated languidly forwards. I kept my sail aloft for the sake of the gleam of it against the confused sooty background, which must throw it out sharp as a light to any eye on the sea-line; but nothing showed all day long. Indeed, there was scarce wind enough to heave anything into view.

I did not suffer much from hunger, thanks, perhaps, to the quantity of rain-water I drank. But I was very weak, and felt sick and ill, and at sundown felt myself scarcely strong enough to bind the oars and mast into an anchor to ride to during the hours of darkness. I stowed myself away under the sail with a short prayer to God to have mercy upon my soul if I died during the night; but

I don't think I cared a finger-snap how it should go with me, so poorly, so low, so heart-crushed was I. I slept in snatches and beheld horrible visions, and towards morning grew a bit light-headed, for I recollect talking aloud and laughing at what I said. Once I seemed to smell the sweetness of wet, new-cut grass, and crawled out of my sail to put my hand over the boat to grasp a handful.

However, at sunrise I felt equal to getting in my sea-anchor and hoisting the sail, and once more I started, heading south as on the previous day, for I had got this superstition upon me, that if I steered in any other direction than south, I should sight nothing, and be found a corpse, if found at all.

This was a fine day, the sun bright and hot, the sky full of large white clouds, mountainous, majestic, glorious in their sunward brows with prismatic light, and their violet shadows slept like islands upon the ocean. Towards noon I was tormented with hunger; perhaps the pangs kept my head straight. I doubt if I could have lost my mind whilst that physical distress was on

me, as they say you can't die whilst you are in pain.

But when this third night came, I was too weak to make a sheaf of the oars; I kept the sail mastheaded, and sat fair betwixt the yoke-lines, one on either thigh, and a nerveless hand upon each of them. And thus the boat drove stealthily along, straight before the wind, heading I don't know how, with a gentle simmering noise rising on either hand her, and many large stars trembling on high amid white puffs of vapour.

As I afterwards guessed, it was about midnight that I lifted my chin in a lifeless way off my breast, and looked with the languor of dying eyes ahead of me. There was a piece of moon over the sea, with an ice-like streak of light shivering under it. The circle came black as ebony to that streak, and the gleam clasped it in silver. The draught—the breeze was no more—was fanning faintly in the lugsail which emptied and filled as the boat softly rose and sank. My hands upon the yoke-lines had kept the helm right amidships, and the gig had doubt-

less pursued the path of an arrow during my hours of insensibility.

My eye was resting dully and stupidly upon the ice-like shivering path of light upon the lee bow, when it was taken by a deep shadow there. The moon's wake streamed hard by it. I started, and all that was left of vitality rushing into my vision then—I looked again, and beheld a large ship, not two miles distant, whitening into the moonlight out of the deep dye of her hull, like a cliff soaring snow-clad from a base of dark rock.

Presently the moon came over the ship when she was about a mile off. She stood black and clean-edged in outline, which enabled me to see she was hove-to, with some suggestion of disorder in the manner her yards were braced, though of this I could not be sure.

It was between one and two o'clock in the morning. Not a light gleamed on the fabric; no sound came from her save the occasional flap of canvas as she rolled. My eyes were dim with famine, suffering, the

companionship of death in one of its most shocking aspects, and before I was up with the ship the moon was off her—her hull was deep shadow again, and her canvas a pale cloud—yet I could see her well enough to steer straight.

When I thought her within hail of my weak throat, I tried to stand up whilst I sung out; but could not use my legs. I then endeavoured to shout; my voice was a husky whisper—the hideous articulation of the gaping and grinning mouth of thirst! Without strength to rise, without voice to exert, oh God, thought I, unless I am seen I shall strike stem on, slide past, float clear on the other side, and blow away into eternity!

In the instant of the above ejaculation of my soul the note of a powerful, familiar voice came along from the ship—

“Boat ahoy!”

I was fainting, but consciousness pricked its ears afresh on hearing those tones. I recognized them, yet was too weak-headed to recollect the man’s name.

“Boat ahoy!”

I was now within a few ship's lengths of the vessel, heading to hit her a little forward of the main-chains, with just enough of sense in me to hope that the channels would hook the boat before she slid clear, or the main-brace foul her mast and arrest her way should she slipped astern. This had been in my head before I heard the voice; but now being hailed, I knew I was seen, and, being seen, that I should be rescued.

I dimly distinguished a group of shadows near the mizzen-rigging, and heard a fluttering growl of eager talk. I seemed to recognize the ship, swollen and disproportioned as she looked to my disordered brain, shaping and re-forming as if fashioned of a thunder-cloud; bulbous aloft as though a breeze blew, but ghastly pale and writhing from yard-arm to yardarm, every perceptible shroud wriggling off into the darkness in a horrible likeness of huge eels of endless length. The gig entered the dark shadow of her, and the fabric of spars and canvas reeled towering over me to the stars.

“It’s the ship’s gig, and there’s Mr. Morgan in her,” some one over my head said.

The boat’s bows hit the side; the shock was slight—as trifling as the thrust of a boathook, yet it struck through my brain like the blow of a stone. As the boat swung, I struggled to stand, and fell forward insensible.

CHAPTER XI.

BRIGSTOCK'S VISIT.

ON regaining consciousness, I found myself in a bunk in a ship's cabin. I stared vacantly, understanding nothing. Then I took notice of things one by one; it was night-time; the bracket lamp was alight, and swung sharply; a woman sat near it with her back upon me, holding up a book to her face. She had black hair in great plenty, was without a hat, and was dressed in black, with a white apron.

I lay with hopeless brains. Nothing was to be grasped for a long while. As a stone is to a sitting hen in a passion of incubation, so to my intelligence was this cabin with its figure of a woman reading by lamplight.

On a sudden, but not for many minutes

after I had opened my eyes, the woman turned and looked at me. It was Kate Darnley. The instant I saw her, I smiled, knowing her, and then it was all mine in a flash of perception.

I was in the captain's cabin, in the *Earl of Leicester*, and yonder was Kate Darnley, nursing me. She got up and came close, holding by the side of the bunk. The ship was pitching and rolling heavily. There was a frequent thunder of rushing surge, and lightning-like glance of white waters upon the cabin window, and the air was full of grinding noises, and of the long-drawn vibrant humming you hear under deck when a gale is sweeping betwixt reeling masts.

I looked up into Kate's dark eyes and tried to speak, but could only make mouths at her. She put her hand upon my forehead, and still holding the side of the bunk, she sank to the full length of her arm, and put her face close to mine. I contrived, perhaps by speech, perhaps by gesture—a deuce of a dreamy time was that!—to make her understand I was hungry and thirsty. She left

me, but soon returned with a pannikin of spirits and water, and a sandwich of biscuits and tinned meat. She managed her footing finely, swaying without stagger or run upon the hard, quick heave of the deck, as a bubble poises to the perpendicular, make you what angles you will with the pipe that blows it.

I tried to sit up, but could not. She got behind me, and pillowed my back with her figure, contriving her hands as a table for me, and so I ate and drank, and in a very little while was marvellously better for the meal. She knelt by my side—a safe posture in such a sea as I now felt was running—and our talk went thus—

“What has happened?”

“Oh, much. You have been insensible ever since you were taken out of the boat.”

“The boat—the boat—I remember! How long ago is it?”

“This is Friday night. You were rescued on Wednesday night about this hour.”

“What’s the time?”

“Nearly three o’clock. It’s blowing fearfully, and the ship is hove-to. Whilst I

kneel, I should give God thanks you are here. It's been stormy ever since that night, but not as now."

"Brigstock—Brigstock," I muttered. "*That's* the name. He's my murderer, though I live. For the second time, too, since I left England! Will the third time fail? The devils! To send me adrift in that thickness, and the schooner to windward, d'ye remember? and the villains trimming sail the moment I was adrift! For what?—For *what?*"

"Now be calm. You are safe, and they are sorry."

I sobbed once or twice like a fool in my weakness, whereupon she stroked my hand.

"Holy God! I exclaimed. "What a time they've made me go through!"

"It was your friend, Alice Perry's doing," said she. "Not that there was malice in it; it was ignorant, unreckoning hate."

"Of *me?*"

"No, no, of the Brigstock lot."

"Oh yes," said I, smiling and speaking faintly, "I remember."

But what I meant I don't know, for at this

point my head got confused, my eyes turned up, Kate's face faded out, I struggled to speak, to see her, to collect my mind, then as she afterwards told me, sunk, with a long sigh into a sleep, deep and dreamless as the slumber of the grave.

There was a brave dance of sunshine in the cabin when I awoke. The light off the rolling ocean outside streamed with piercing whiteness through the cabin port-hole, with an occasional eclipse of the wet circle of glass by a roaring, green sea. I seemed to find myself as well as ever I had been in my life, until I endeavoured to sit up, and was then sensible of a good deal of weakness and prostration.

A mattress lay upon the cabin deck ; Kate stood before the looking-glass winding her hair up on her head, and the moulded ripenesses of her figure found twenty graceful expressions whilst she leaned from the slant of the plank, her hands above her. I called her name, and she looked round with a blush and a smile. After some commonplaces of greeting, she told me it was nine o'clock, and

that Brigstock had tapped twice on the door within the past hour to know if I was awake and how I did.

“But they have another navigator?”

“No. The man they stole knows nothing about it.”

“Nothing about it!”

“He called himself second mate when he came on board, and they took it for granted he knew navigation, so they locked him up after nearly killing the poor wretch, just as they imprisoned you. But when they asked him to navigate the ship, he told them he was a sailmaker, and had never learnt to read or write.”

Seeing me laughing, she broke into a hearty laugh herself.

“As sailmaker he was, of course, acting as second mate of the schooner,” said I, breaking up my words with laughter. “What’s become of him?”

“He’s in the fore-castle, and is one of the crew. I have been nursing you since Wednesday night, and know little of what’s going on in the ship.”

“Have they been sailing her?”

“Not since Wednesday morning.”

But I could see by the hurrying of light in the cabin that she was going through it now, and the tell-tale, which hung within easy eyeshot, gave her course as south-south-west.

“I’ll get you some breakfast,” said Kate, taking up her hat from the writing-table.

“Who was that woman that committed suicide?”

“A girl named Mary Lonney. Oh! what a terrible night that was. She slept in one of the closed places, next to Miss Cobbs. Three lay on one shelf; Miss Lonney was the middle one. The two were covered with her blood, and their cries were dreadful, and so were their looks when the lantern was lighted, and we saw them in their night-dresses.”

“What did the girl kill herself for?”

“They say she was mad. There are several stories. One is that she was engaged to be married. The man not only left her, but robbed her, and she determined to

emigrate. She was a pensive, sad-faced girl, with the most wistful eyes I ever saw."

She shuddered, took a shawl from the mattress, and left the cabin. There was a promptness of manner, a decision of speech in her, that wonderfully pleased me; it gave a fine spirited colouring to one's thoughts of her. She was a sort of girl, I thought, to encounter life with a firm brow, and a conquering patience of resolution, and I was grateful to her for nursing me and for the light of the thankful heart in her face when she found me conscious.

I lay quiet, watching the play of the foam-white dazzle in the cabin, thinking over the horrible days and nights I had passed in the ship's gig, and reflecting very earnestly in the direction of the future, how I was to bear myself with Brigstock and the crew, what manner I should put on if they offered me command again, and so on. When Kate returned, she was followed by Gouger with some breakfast for her and me. I looked the young brute sternly in the face, but otherwise made no sign. The fellow viewed me askew,

shyly and uneasily, and went out in a skulking manner after putting down the breakfast-tray. I told Kate that that dog had never once spoken to me all the time I was locked up in a torment of suspense, not being able to imagine the charge against me nor what the crew designed.

"I it was," she said, "more than Alice Perry who cleared you, though at a cost which I'm afraid won't please you."

"I don't understand."

"Why," she answered, "though I heard that the men had imprisoned you, I could not get to learn why. Miss Cobbs refused to explain. The rumour went that they had confined you because of your insisting upon training a crew of women to work the ship. I wondered at that, and told Brigstock I thought it hard you should be locked up merely for amusing a section of the girls. He answered me so short, I determined to say no more to him, never guessing, however, what was to happen to you. We were at breakfast when the hatch was covered up; Miss Cobbs had previously lighted the lanterns. We

were again imprisoned, and some of the women were horribly frightened. It was shocking to be locked up in a ship that was without a navigator, in the power of a set of men who might at any moment throw off the mask and prove themselves villains."

She paused to hand me some tea, then resumed.

"We were kept below till we were nearly suffocated. It was pouring with rain when the hatch was opened. I was the first to run up, feeling secretly convinced that whilst we had been locked up in the 'tweendecks the men had been doing something to you. I saw Brigstock standing in the cuddy-door; he looked as if he had been fighting. I asked him what he had done with you? He pointed with his thumb over his shoulder, and said, 'He's been sent away.' 'What for?' I said, terribly frightened; I imagined they had killed you. He looked at me moodily, as if debating whether he should answer; then broke into speech with a roaring voice of rage, and told me the crew had sent you away because you'd plotted to confine them

in the fok'sle, and sail to the nearest port, where you'd hand them over to the police as pirates."

"As I thought," said I.

"He told me I might save my tears, as you weren't dead yet, though, had it been any other crew than this ship's, your body would be swinging at the yardarm. I went into the 'tweendecks to think. I then called to Alice Perry, and brought her and others of the girls you taught around me, and told them how Brigstock had sent you away, though in what manner, and for what I did not know. Then Alice Perry, with her eyes on fire, said it was her doing, though she had never meant it should hurt you. Some of the girls had talked about the plot they'd hatched, and gone to you in the cuddy to talk over; they had been overheard, or perhaps couldn't keep the secret. Certain of the women, who have taken up with the seamen, carried what they'd picked up to the crew. When Alice Perry heard this, she went forward and made matters worse by taunting the crew, declaring that they were in your power, and would be

in the hands of the police before long. And, vile-tempered fool as she is ! persuaded them the plot that had come to their ears was *yours*. This she owned whilst we sat talking about it in the 'tweendecks. After hearing her, I made her go with me to Brigstock, to whom I explained your motive for training a company of girls to manœuvre the ship. He listened like a man who is willing that justice should be done. I told him that the plot had been the girls', not yours. Alice Perry declared that that was so, named a number of the women who had talked it over, and said in her fiery, affronting way, that she and the others had come to you, and you had refused to hear them on the subject. So you see," said she, smiling, "I had to give them the truth to prove your innocence."

"It was then too late. What had he to say upon my motive for training the girls?"

"Nothing. He asked a few questions, but for the most part listened in silence. Upset as I was, I could not help being amused at his airs of importance and efforts to look like a judge. I believe he talked to the crew

afterwards, for they came about us and asked many questions, collecting evidence, as it were, all which went to establish your innocence; the women who called upon you in the cabin, all agreed in their story. But I think what helped them best to see the truth was the discovery that the man they'd stolen was perfectly illiterate, and no navigator."

"Did you hear what had become of me?"

"Yes, the men told their pardners, as Miss Cobbs calls them, you'd been sent in a boat to the schooner they'd stolen the man from. I believed you were safe, little imagining the reality."

Just at this minute the door was rapped, and Brigstock called to know if he could come in. On entering, he shut the door, then backed against it, pulling off his cap, and twisting it with gestures of agitation, whilst he eyed me with the stupid, steadfast stare of a sheep at a dog, slowly moving his jaw, as though he ground tobacco.

I should have been deeply stirred by the sight of the fellow, had I not had plenty of time to consider how I should bear myself

when we met. I was now sitting up in my bunk. They had removed my soaked clothes on taking me out of the boat, and dressed my lifeless figure in a flannel shirt, and warm, slop sea-drawers, and stockings used for sea-boots, and over all was a blanket. I looked wild and grim, with disordered hair and beard of four days' growth. The sailor wore his hair as flowing as his trousers in those days; mine hid my ears, and curled upon my coat-collar.

"Captain Morgan," said Brigstock, in a slow, deep, trembling voice, "I hope as yer now a-feeling of yer old self again, sir?"

"Mr. Brigstock, you and your people have used me most damnably ill."

"It never would have been done, had we knowed the truth."

"The truth! Why, man, you wouldn't take the trouble to find it out. Is the sentencing of a man before he's heard to be part of your constitution?—the sentencing of him to *death*, mark you! for you know you sent me away to perish!"

His mouth worked as though he were

overwhelmed with thought too big for utterance. He flung his cap down, and approaching my bunk with a stride, first looking slowly, with something of a bewildered expression at Kate, and then fastening his dark eyes upon me, he exclaimed, "We thought jer meant to clap the hatches on us men, and navigate the vessel to where yer could give us into custody. They said it was your scheme. Why didn't jer tell us why you was a-putting them females through their facings for as sailors? If for to navigate this ship after we'd left her, why didn't jer say so? You so hacted, and we so misonderstood, that there was nothen but to make the two and two a plain four, and thankful I am, and truly grateful, likewise, that jer death warn't the consequence of the conclusion we arrived at."

"You called me villain. You would not hear me!" I cried, trembling and flushing with the temper his words excited.

"The captain is still very weak, and oughtn't to be worried," said Kate.

"I've come to ask his forgiveness, miss.

Capt'n, it was a mistake. We was goaded to it. That there Alice Perry made out we was in your power, and that you meant to bring us to punishment. We had trusted jer, and done what was right, and I tell yer the news of that there scheme, which we took to be yourn, turned the blood in our veins into blazing oil, and I thank the Lord, I do, that it's as it be, so mad we all was. Three was for——”

He checked himself, and sunk his eyes ; pulled a red handkerchief out of his pocket, and mopped his brow.

The man's voice assured me his agitation was unaffected ; so did the movements of his face. He advanced another stride, and extended his hand.

“Capt'n, I'm here on the part of the crew, for to ask yer pardon. May I tell 'em it's granted?”

“Damn your fool's play!” cried I, passionately. “What good is my forgiveness to men who, on the evidence of any lying woman in the 'tweendecks, would yardarm me to-morrow, would swing me *now*, without

giving me a chance to prove my innocence?"

"It never could happen again, sir," said he, in a heavy, level, solemn voice.

"Chaw!"

"You'll be in a fever, if this goes on," said Kate.

He began to address me. I cut him short with the insolence and contempt of the quarter-deck in its references to the fore-castle.

"What is it you want? You have a navigator. Now you know I'm an innocent man you don't ask for my blood, do you? Therefore put me honestly aboard the first ship that comes along."

"Then I must tell yer," said he, "that we ain't got no navigator."

"You plundered the schooner of one. What have you done with him?"

"He called himself second mate, but he's no navigator. He's scarce got larning enough to write a cross for his mark. I thought he was a-lying, and put that there sextant into his hand, but I soon see he didn't know what it was."

“What do you want?”

“Your sarvices, sir.”

I lay back and shut my eyes.

“Leave him,” said Kate, “or he’ll be too ill to serve you.”

He was scared by this hint, and softly went out.

As the morning advanced, I felt strong enough to rise. The clothes I wore when sent adrift were in the cabin. I shaved, and dressed myself, and felt perfectly well, only that I was a little weak in the knees. I opened the log-book, and smiled to observe that no entries had been made since the date when my own hand had last written in it.

Brigstock may have heard from Kate that I was getting up. He knocked on the cabin-door just before I had finished dressing. He was accompanied by Isaac Coffin and Joe Harding. I folded my arms, and leaned against the bunk. Harding knuckled his forehead, and said in a low voice—

“Capt’n, I can only say, as man to man, I’m glad it is *as it is*.”

“You’d have hanged me!” I exclaimed.

"Not Joe," said Brigstock, gravely.

"You told me just now that three of you would have—then checked yourself. Which of you would have done it?" said I, turning my eye upon Coffin.

Brigstock answered, "Only consider what we was afeered yer meant to do."

"Was that man one of the three?" said I, pointing to Coffin.

They were silent, but I found my answer in the hung face of the fellow, crumpled as it was, and almost expressionless with moustache.

"Go forward," said I, sternly.

The man hung in the wind for an instant, with a glance from Brigstock to the other, then left the cabin.

"Capt'n," said Brigstock, "d'jer feel well enough now to talk things over?"

"Before you'll get a syllable from me in the way of business, you'll beg my pardon for calling me villain."

"I do, sir! I do, sir!" he cried.

"You, too, were infernally uncivil, Mr. Harding."

“Only consider what was a-running in our heads,” he answered with a sour look, and his thumb and fingers upon his chin, as though he were holding his beard to it.

I began to bully them on this; stormed at, and even cursed them, strong with the sense of their renewed confidence in me, and defiant with the perception of their utter dependence. No Nova Scotia skipper, bulged and knobby with revolvers, and backed by a grenadier of a chief mate, and an armoury of belaying-pins, ever *hazed* a loafing crew in stronger forecastle rhetoric than I those two men for sending me adrift in thick weather, heedless as to whether I reached the schooner or not. When I thought enough had been said on this head, I rounded abruptly upon Brigstock, and asked him what he had come to tell me?

“We want yer to take charge of this ship, sir. It’s drawing on for noon, and we should like yer to take an observation, as we’re anxious to know where we are.”

“You’re for beginning things over and over again. All was well with us; but

you're like a bad-tempered woman : you can't leave well alone. Are you still resolved to settle an island ? ”

“ Why, yes, of course we are, sir.”

“ If I take charge, who's to warrant me from being hindered in carrying you to the South Seas ? ”

“ Name your tarms,” said Brigstock.

“ Do you believe in the Bible ? ”

“ Certainly I do,” he answered, with a solemn drop of his head.

“ And you ? ”

“ As much as I know of it,” answered Harding.

“ Would an oath taken on that Book be held binding by you and the crew ? ”

“ Why, then,” exclaimed Brigstock, after a pause, speaking deep with fervour, “ I say it *would*.”

“ Very well,” said I. “ I'll draw up the oath, and the crew shall lay aft and take it—on *your* Bible, Mr. Brigstock ; I suppose you have one ? ”

“ I have, sir.”

“ When they've sworn the oath I'll pre-

pare, in the form I prescribe, I'll take charge of the ship."

Brigstock contorted his figure into a singular sea-bow. Harding was about to speak.

"No. Let's hear the hoath first, Joe," said Brigstock, interrupting him, as though the surly fellow's thought had been written on his face.

"You tell me the man you kidnapped is of no use?" said I.

"Of no more use than a figure-head," answered Brigstock.

"What's his name?"

"Thomas Bull, sir."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"He's a-going along with us."

"To settle?"

"Ay," exclaimed Harding.

"Has he found a pardner?"

"He has, sir," answered Brigstock, gravely.

CHAPTER XII.

THE OATH.

BY the height of the sun, as nearly as I could tell, it was about eleven o'clock. The wind blew fresh, the sea ran strong and in wide hollows, and the lift and fall of the ship was as regular as the sweep of a swing. The snow-white foam, choking the window in dazzling leaps with alternations of the green eclipse of the clear brine, told me we were sailing through it, and fast. It was hard to make out the sky in the wet blindness of the glass.

I determined to get an observation, but to keep the reckoning to myself unless the men did what I required. Whilst looking for a sheet of paper, I cast my eye over the cabin, but could not observe that it had been

occupied, or in any way meddled with since the day I was sent adrift. I took a seat at the table, and after several experiments, framed an oath that satisfied me. I smiled whilst I put the paper in my pocket. Not for a moment did I suppose that the fellows would regard any oath they kissed the Book on as binding. But I was resolved to have the satisfaction of their humiliation which I intended to render as complete as an audience can make such things—nor was it quite impossible but that the oath lying in their minds might spin for itself a sort of cocoon of conscience—but I had little hope in that way.

When it was about half-past eleven, I buttoned my coat, put on my cap, and took a sextant out of its case. I was pale and somewhat hollow about the eyes, and may have betrayed other signs of having suffered. I found Gouger in the cuddy; he made way for me with abject respect.

“Go forward and stop there,” said I, “until you’re called aft along with the others.”

He hurried out with eager obedience, and I liked that response to my orders better than any oath he could have sworn.

When I gained the deck, I found a spacious, wonderful scene of brilliant morning, splendid everywhere with the hurl of rolling masses of foam into the sunlight that poured in flashing broadsides of light through clouds of enormous bulk and inconceivable majesty and beauty of tint and figure. In a glance I had the whole scene—half a gale of wind on the quarter, curling and roaring ridges, the horizon working ruggedly against cliffs of vapour sinking over the bow, and terraces of vapour soaring over the stern—the ship pitching, lurching, thundering onwards, with dives which brought the foam washing to the spritsail-yard, under whole topsails and a maintopgallant-sail, and the mainsail with the weather clew up; two hands at the wheel, and Brigstock at the break of the poop to windward, talking to a man who was strange to me, whom I at once set down as Thomas Bull.

I walked slowly forwards on somewhat

shaky legs—for up on deck here, in the head-long pouring of air, I did not feel so strong as I had thought myself, and was at the rail overlooking the main-deck before Brigstock and his companion observed me.

A large number of women were on deck—about two-thirds of the whole—they herded chiefly upon the quarter-deck abaft the main-mast, as though for the shelter of the cuddy-front. I had scarcely shown myself, when a voice shrieked out, “There’s the captain!”

Almost in a breath, as though moved by a single controlling power, every head rounded towards me in a movement of white faces—the effect of that simultaneous action was extraordinary—those who were walking came to a stand with startling abruptness, as though rooted; and *then*, and all whilst you might count ten, there arose an amazing, universal, wild cry of greeting, shrieks and screams of welcome, and hand-clapping that was like the emptying of a sack of shingle, or a lusty fire of crackers and squibs, together with a confused sawing of arms and fluttering of handkerchiefs.

“Yer’ll stop this time!” squealed a girl.

“We ain’t going to let you go again!” yelled another.

“There stands the man as would have murdered him,” screamed Alice Perry, pointing at Brigstock, and coming in an elbowing run to the foot of the poop-ladder; “and the beast wants to lay it all to me!”

“You lie, you drab!” bawled Brigstock.

“How ill he looks!” cried a woman just beneath me. “Why wasn’t I asked to nurse him?”

“Captain, may I speak to you?” cried Alice Perry, looking up with a passionate face, wild with blown hair and angry eyes.

There was such a hubbub then that I declined to exert my voice, and answering the girl by significantly lifting my sextant, I raised my cap as a general salute, and walked slowly aft, hearing Alice Perry shriek, “Captain, don’t let him tell lies of me,” whilst Brigstock shouted, “Keep down—keep down. Yer can’t come up here. Keep down, I say!”

As before, when I first took sights in this

ship, so now was I watched with pathetic eagerness by the crowds of females who climbed on to the bulwarks, and, defying Brigstock, heaped themselves upon the poop-ladder to observe me whilst I screwed the sun down to the jagged sea-line. I was left in full possession of the weather quarter-deck. The man, Bull, had gone forward, and, in company with other seamen, stared aft from abreast of the galley, where some of the mess-women of the 'tweendecks were talking together. I made noon, and eight bells were instantly struck by some one on the quarter-deck.

Brigstock came along to me whilst I was stepping to the companion, and respectfully touching his cap, said, "Capt'n, we take this here shooting of the sun all the same as saying that there's no longer any feeling 'twixt you and us men touching the past."

"You may take it as you like," I answered; and without another word went below.

I worked out the latitude with some curiosity, and found that I was wrong in my expectations by above a degree. Indeed,

the ship had made seventy miles of something in excess of what I had supposed. When I was done with my figures, I went into the cuddy, and then remembered that I had sent Gouger forward. I had forgotten I was to dine, and going to the cuddy-door, I shouted along the deck for Gouger. In a moment the fellow came running aft, and I ordered him to get me some dinner, and put a bottle of beer upon the table. All the girls were not yet below, but many of them had left the deck; some of the mess-women were at that moment coming along with kids of beef and pudding.

I had scarcely given my orders to Gouger, whom I addressed in a strong brutal voice, scowling to advise him I was master again, and to have a care, when Alice Perry broke out of a group of women, and was upon me before I could withdraw.

“Capt’n,” she cried, “let me have a word with yer. I’m your own girl to the heels, and on my sacred word of honour, if yer’ll take me as one of your sailors again, yer’ll never have cause to complain of me. Now keep

off, do!" she exclaimed, turning upon some women who were gathering about us. "Here have I been charged by that Cobbs and her pal Thomas with causing the crew to send the capt'n away in a boat to die. S'elp me, Judas, it's as blistered a lie as never was!" she shrieked. "But keep off, will yer, that I may 'ave a word along with 'im."

"What do you want to say?" I asked, taking her by the hand and bringing her a little way into the cuddy, though keeping her well in view of the quarter-deck.

The truth is, I looked upon this Alice Perry as the smartest girl-sailor I was likely to find or make in that shipload of females; and I had a sneaking liking for her too, spite of her wild, bitter, saucy tongue, because I believed her warm at heart, and an honest girl, and I don't say I wasn't a little prejudiced by her looks—she was indeed coarse, but then she was handsome, of that sort of low vulgar beauty which makes a good figure on the stage when it's viewed afar, and lighted up and softened.

"Don't let that there Brigstock persuade

you it was me as made him send yer away in a boat."

"I don't want to go into the matter."

"I'd have locked 'em all up as I told yer," she exclaimed, her eyes flashing with temper, and her cheeks red with it too, "for they're a measly lot, and a curse to us girls, who don't want nothen to do with 'em. I own I bounced 'em by saying you'd be glad if some of the women 'ud report we'd locked 'em up down in the hold. That there rag who's Kate Davis's choosing—God deliver me from the likes of such a face! with that moustache of his he looks like the remains of a man sitting be'ind a broom to hide his ugliness, and a-crumpling up his flesh to smother the parts he can't conceal—he cheeks me one morning—though in the doctor's time they was forbid to speak to us, and," said she, clenching her fist and breathing quickly, "I just looked at him as I'm looking at you, and I says, says I," and here she pitched her voice into an insulting, provoking drawl, "'I'm sorry for you,' I says, 'when the capt'n's handed

you over to them as have the handling of such vermin.' That was all. So don't let Brigstock tell no more lies of me to you," and she rolled up her fiery eyes as though she would pierce through the plank to the man who was stumping the deck above on the look-out.

"We'll drop this matter," said I, "and talk of what's to the point. Before I was sent away, you refused to be a sailor. Now, will you sail under my flag again?"

"What d'yer mean?" said she, staring with passionate earnestness.

"Will you be one of my sailors, and top the list of all hands, as you're bound to—for you're as smart as you're handsome, and as nimble as you're clever, and I can't do without you."

"I'll do anything you ask," she repeated, with her face on fire with pleasure. "Only don't think me a liar."

"We'll start the class again when I'm done with the crew. I shall want to have you well in hand before we're up with the Horn."

“Dress me up as a man. I can climb. I lay I’d lick that little fat Jupe in trotting up them ladders,” said she, pointing through the window at the rigging. “He crawls like a November blue-bottle up a winder. You dress me as a man, and see me take the shine out of him.”

I smiled, on which she made the cabin ring again with peals of shrill laughter. Brigstock hearing the noise, leaned half his body into the skylight to look at us; but, seeing me he immediately drew back.

“Your dinner waits, and so does mine. There’ll be plenty of time for talks like this if the crew don’t send me adrift again.”

“Let them lay a finger on yer!” she exclaimed with a mirthless smile or rather grin, which laid bare her strong, coarse white teeth; it was a snarling, hellish look, and she wanted nothing but a naked knife to complete her.

I was about to go.

“Can yer learn me that whistle Miss Darnley wears?” said she.

“Get you to your dinner,” I answered.

When I had eaten some salt beef, and drunk a bottle of beer, and smoked a cigar, I felt about equal to the business I had in hand. By this time most of the women were on deck again. Whilst I sat at the table smoking, Brigstock came to the cuddy-door, but went away after looking at me a moment. I had nearly called to him to come and sit down, but the resolution I had formed that morning prevailed : to consider the crew as men who would have murdered me, to hold no intercourse whatever with them beyond giving orders, to keep strictly to my end of the ship, and take no notice of their behaviour, but always when the obligation to address them arose to let them understand I had not forgotten that they would have destroyed me.

It was shortly after one when I left the table. As I approached the cuddy-door, Brigstock came along the quarter-deck.

“Capt’n,” said he, “will you give us the ship’s position?”

“Not till the crew have taken the oath I’ve drawn up,” I answered.

“They’re willing and waiting,” said he.

“Then send them aft, and tell Miss Cobbs I want her.”

I stood well within the cuddy, not wishing to be accosted by the women, numbers of whom, in pairs and threes, mostly arm-in-arm, were walking about the main and quarter-decks, with rippling skirts and flying ribbons and fluttering fal-lals of dress, squeaking inane laughter when a sudden swift slant despatched them interlaced in a run to leeward. The wind was merry with their voices, and the decks looked like the main street of a town on a market day.

Miss Cobbs rose through the main-hatch, and made an uncommonly respectable figure in her large bonnet and sausage curls, and dark green up and down dress, too lean, too scraggy of fold for the wind to play with. She came with her customary wire-fine simper, and demure lift and fall of eyes, and when she entered the cuddy-door she dropped me a curtsy.

“I’m truly ’appy to see you back again, and well, sir,” she exclaimed, “after your

terrible experiences all brought about by the lies of certain base-tongued parties."

"Will you be so good," said I, as coldly and steadily as the mixed emotions she filled me with permitted, "to ask those ladies to draw themselves up on either hand of the deck, to witness a ceremony of oath-taking that's about to happen?"

"At once, sir?"

"Instantly."

She went amongst the women, and I stepped on to the poop. I saw Kate Darnley in the lee gangway, and nodded and kissed my hand. How long, I wondered, was she going to worry me with her 'tweendeck prejudices? Why on earth wouldn't she live aft? What would there be in such a thing to misconstrue? Wasn't it and isn't it customary for young ladies to be consigned to the care of captains, and to cross the seas to the very ends of the earth with no other eye to look after them than the skipper's? She had nursed me devotedly whilst I lay unconscious. Her care had saved my life for all I knew; and there she was, modestly

withdrawn from my side now I was well, herding with the Alice Perrys and Kate Davises and the Selah Bungs, and the rest of them, pardners or no pardners, cooks, housemaids, and the chocolate girl, Emma Marks.

But now Brigstock had sung out to the crew, and all hands of them—the dog Luddy being at the wheel—were laying aft, amongst them Thomas Bull, who, Luddy not counting, made with the others twelve stout seamen.

This Bull was a big man, of a figure and head that answered to his name. He was thick-necked, and three or four chins rolled into his throat, like a ground swell into a cove. He was close shaved, or perhaps was without hair on his face, but plenty flowed in long ringlets from under his Scotch cap. He wore a sleeved-waistcoat and heavy pilot-cloth breeches, very roomy in what Captain Marryatt calls the “west end.” He was a bit of a dandy too, with a silver watch-chain and a green cravat, over which drooped the unstarched collar of a sailor’s shirt. No

doubt he was thus dressed when stolen. I did not wonder that so much bulk should give its kidnappers trouble. If he had been half-murdered, he had picked up again pretty well since that time. He looked fresh and hearty, and came along with a smile as he glanced at the girls.

They, all agog with excitement, had gladly and eagerly "fallen in" according to Miss Cobbs's instructions, and now stood on either hand the deck, so massed they seemed twice as many. The sight of that heap of human life, with the twelve men coming along, and the wide surface of foaming ocean outside dwindling the fabric of the ship into a tiny floating toy, put something of tragic significance, on the instant, into the thought of taking command.

Brigstock carried a big Bible under his arm. I went down on the quarter-deck when the fellows were assembled, and going to the little capstan there, bade Brigstock hand me the Book. It was bound in old leather, and showed many marks of hard wear, and had evidently gone plenty of long

voyages. I took it in my hand to see that it was our Protestant Bible, and finding it all right, but incredibly worn and thumb-marked inside, I put it down upon the capstan, and pulled the paper upon which I had written the oath out of my pocket.

Before reading aloud I looked the men over one by one as they stood in a huddle of twelve mariners right abreast to windward, that is, to starboard of the capstan, backed on that side by a mass of about forty women, all straining their eyes, all silent, all wondering what was going to happen, looking as though they were to see a man hanged.

Though young I was not wanting in self-control; I could put on any face that might suit my mood or design, and having been thrown with seamen all my life, I was very easy in their presence, easier than in any other company. I gazed sternly at the men one after another, and they returned my stare, with here and there perhaps a little gleam of insolence in some deep-set eye; but on the whole their bearing was reluctant,

significant of misgiving and uncertainty, as if they were called up to be rated and then punished.

Incredible this may seem ; but here let me say that it is impossible for any landsman to understand what I may call the magic of the quarter-deck influence upon the fore-castle. It is professional habit ; it is an instinct of the blood ; it is the effect of a recognition for centuries of a despotism necessary and absolute. However these men might have used me before, now that I was again on board their ship, on the quarter-deck, viewing them as captain by their own election, the influence of my position was upon them ; I beheld it in every face, in every posture, and felt it also by that interpretation of sympathy which is often your only satisfying revelation.

“ You want me,” said I, after a considerable silence which had not been broken by so much as a whisper, though there must have stood a full hundred souls of us upon the main and quarter-decks of the ship, “ to resume command here ? Is that so ? ”

A general murmur arose among the men : it was to the effect that it was so.

“Do you believe I’m to be trusted?”

“We’re all agreed on that point,” broke in Brigstock; “what I said to you in private, I repeat to you in public; we’re all sorry we misunderstood yer, and we beg yer pardon.”

He made a movement with his hands as though he would collect the attention of the mob of women on both sides the deck to his words.

“So you ought to it!” cried a woman, shrilly.

“Silence, ladies, if you please,” sung out Miss Cobbs, from somewhere.

“That’s all right,” I said, addressing Brigstock. “You’re willing to trust me now; but I’m by no means willing to trust you and your mates.”

“Give it ’em!” called out a woman, and some handclaps followed.

Then turning upon the men, I let fly at them, abandoning myself to my temper, and heedless of what I said, convinced that since justice was on my side the livelier my speech,

the more convincing the impression. I was frequently interrupted by the applause of the women. So intemperate, so headlong was my address, that I have no clear recollection of what I said. Once or twice I caught a growl of protest, but I looked the man down, and stormed him into half a score of uneasy attitudes in as many moments. I called them murderers.

“No true seamen,” I shouted, “would have treated their captain as you treated me. No mangy mongrel, found starving in a fore-peak, would have been served by sailors as I was served by you. You sent me adrift—a single man in a heavy boat, without food or water, in thick blowing weather,”—and I over went the ground, raving the whole story at them, with frequent shakes of my fist, and again and again did the women encourage me, and urge me on by all sorts of cries and clapping of their hands.

By the time I was done, they were as sullen and scowling as condemned men, all save the burly fellow Thomas Bull, who viewed me steadfastly, with a countenance of cheerful

admiration. However, I cared nothing for their looks; though I had cooled down by this time, I cried out savagely, "I'll not take command of a ship's company I can't trust. Oh yes, you're willing, I dare say, I should take command now; and in the middle watch you'll be routing me up to send me adrift again on some brutal excuse you'll manufacture out of the first 'tweendecks' lie that's carried forward."

"No, sir," groaned Brigstock; "I told *jer no!*"

"You must take this oath," cried I, flourishing the paper. "Are you willing to swear?"

"What d'yer want us to swear about?" said Prentice.

"You—you!—why, man, *you'll* have to take the oath peculiarly," I yelled. "Damn you, *you're* the worst of the lot!"

"Give it 'em, give it 'em!" cried a woman in a voice edged to a shriek with enjoyment and delight.

"Read out what you want us to swear," said Coffin, sullenly.

“Listen now,” I exclaimed, and opening the paper I read as follows:—

“‘I (and here comes in the name of the man), in consideration of Captain Morgan faithfully navigating this ship to an island in the South Seas, swear that I will dutifully obey all his orders, never judge of his meaning by any stories which may be carried into the fore-castle, never hinder him in disciplining the ladies, or carrying out all other such schemes as he may consider good for the common safety: and I further swear to peaceably hand over the ship and all such emigrants as desire to remain in her to him, the said Captain Morgan, on our arrival at the island we decide to settle. So help me God.’”

In profoundest silence by all, men and women, was I listened to, not a whisper breaking in. I read loudly, clearly, and slowly, that my voice might be heard above the roar of the white brine on either hand, and the low thunder in the hollows above, and the wild whistling and hooting of the wind splitting on shroud and brace.

I looked at Brigstock. All the sailors' eyes were upon him—most of the women's eyes upon me. He chewed whilst he felt the shape of his chin, then said, "It's a reasonable hoath, and well wrote."

"All must take it," said I. "No use administering it to a few."

Brigstock turned upon the men, and asked them, one after the other, if they would take the oath they had heard me read, and every man, one after another, said he would. Then Brigstock came to the capstan and took up the Bible, with his eyes fastened upon my face. His manner was exceedingly solemn, perfectly calculated to give all that weight to the ceremony I wanted for it, and to impress the men with a sense of what they were about. I read aloud and he followed, intoning the words nasally, in a deep, relishing voice, and when I made him say, "So help me God," he pronounced the ejaculation with tremulous fervour, kissing the Book slowly and devoutly, bowed and bareheaded, so that I could never imagine an oath sworn with more decency and gravity.

How, thought I, as he stepped aside, could such a man as this have had the heart to treat me as he did ?

One by one the men stepped up. Brigstock's example worked wholesomely. The oath was recited with reverence, and the Bible kissed with proper devotion in every case. It was a long business, yet the women stood watching throughout with deep, patient excitement, perfectly silent, as if enthralled by some miracle of stage performance ; and though there was no dearth of humour in this affair, neither did it lack pathos, as I felt when I glanced at the girls, and thought how the safety of the ship and their very lives were concerned in this strange, uncommon proceeding. When the eleventh man had sworn, I said to Brigstock, "Is Mr. Bull of you?"

"He is," said Brigstock, at which some one amongst the women on the right laughed, the only interruption that had happened for a long time.

"Then you've joined this ship's company?" said I to Bull.

"It's true, sir," he replied in a strong voice, with a vigorous, cheerful smile.

"Am I to understand that you've arranged to settle an island with the rest of the hands?"

"That's it," he answered.

"He's got a pardner," said Brigstock.

"Soosie Murch," exclaimed Bull, looking across to the women on the port side.

"This is her," cried a girl in a voice of disgust, and several women forced a tall, stout, strapping young woman with red hair and red cheeks out of the ranks. This was attended by much hissing and some laughter. The girl, purple with temper and confusion, fell back heavily into the crowd, and got against the bulwarks out of sight.

I ordered Bull to approach, and recited the oath, which he took. He mouthed the words with a careless air, and smiled incessantly, but I believe his grin was born with him. I then sent one of the men to relieve Luddy at the wheel. Much talk prefaced this man's taking the oath. He wanted to know what was the good of swearing? He was a

respectable man. If he said yes, he meant yes. If he said no, he meant no. He'd never taken a hoath afore, and blowed if he saw his way to begin now.

A difficulty was threatened by his pardner, Jess Honeyball, singing out from the tail of the crowd near the cuddy front, "Don't you take no hoaths, Tommy, unless you're sure what's intended."

On this the other Honeyball, Nan, her sister, the cook's pardner, cried out, "Look's swore. Why shouldn't Tommy?"

Luke Wambold was the name of the cook.

Several women began to talk. Brigstock's voice was loud whilst he explained to Luddy that I refused to navigate the ship until the oath was taken by the crew. I thrust one hand in my pocket, holding the paper with the other, and stood in such a posture as might best suggest contemptuous indifference to the issue, exchanging looks with Kate, who stood apart in the gangway, her face pale with interest, surprise, and anxiety.

At last, after much talk, during which I uttered not a syllable, Luddy came gloomily

to the capstan and took the oath, pronouncing the words of it after me in a "what's-the-good-of-it" sort of tone. However, he "so helped him," and kissed the Book as the others had; which done I handed Brigstock the Bible, and said to the crew, "You have proved murderously faithless to me once, but I'll give you another chance. Whilst I'm able to trust you, you'll be able to trust me. Keep the oath, and do your duty."

I then thanked the women for attending, and, pulling off my cap and making a low bow, first to port and then to starboard, I walked straight into the cuddy, a confused noise of feet and tongues closing upon me behind as the crowd broke up.

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